

# **Case studies of South Asian parents in Christchurch: how do they teach culture to their children?**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

By

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## Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>List of Figures, Tables and Images.....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Disclaimer .....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Dedication .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Acknowledgement .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>Chapter one: Introduction .....</b>	<b>15</b>
1.40pm Friday March 15 <sup>th</sup> 2019.....	15
Migration as a global issue and a local one.....	16
A gap in the existing research .....	18
Methodological approach.....	20
Selection of South Asian parents as a focus.....	21
Migration and immigration .....	21
Concepts of multiculturalism .....	22
My positionality as a researcher.....	22
Outline of chapters .....	23
<b>Chapter Two: Context.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Place .....	25
The context of schooling .....	28
Conceptual framework .....	29
My understanding of the New Zealand context .....	35
South Asia in this research .....	40
My Positionality within the research context.....	43
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology .....</b>	<b>45</b>
Focus and purpose of this study .....	45
Research Paradigm.....	46

Qualitative research .....	46
Case study .....	46
Ethnographic approach .....	47
Narratives, and the use of dramatic and graphic elements .....	48
Method of collecting information .....	49
Participants .....	54
My positionality and its impact on my analysis .....	58
Analysis .....	60
Using my field journal .....	61
Searching for the themes; using writing as a tool .....	61
Support sources through working in a learning community .....	62
Character photography and painting .....	63
Sharing the findings .....	68
Ethical considerations .....	69
Boundaries of the study .....	70
<b>Chapter Four: Review of related Literature .....</b>	<b>71</b>
South Asian migrant parents' engagement and expectations in New Zealand schools .....	71
Position of immigrant students and their parents in national and international studies .....	73
Comparison .....	74
Family support .....	74
Language .....	75
Teachers' preparation .....	76
Challenges due to the cultural identity of Muslims in particular .....	77
In contrast .....	77
Difference as diversity .....	78
The Treaty of Waitangi and its relationship with migration .....	80
Diversity in New Zealand .....	84

Multiculturalism .....	87
Positionality and consequent sightlines .....	89
Concepts of culture and cultural place .....	91
Cultural transmission and acculturation .....	92
<b>Chapter Five: Baisakhi.....</b>	<b>96</b>
Living in a pendulum .....	96
Committed to both worlds.....	102
Language is the glue for every aspect of culture.....	103
Festivals of thanksgiving and the core values of the rituals.....	104
Belief in the existence of God without forcing belief in her children.....	106
Differences in Values and Manners .....	107
Standards of showing respect .....	108
Getting out from under gender disparity .....	109
Independent old age .....	110
Forces in school that make cultural transmission difficult.....	111
Changing physical appearance .....	113
Learning about New Zealand's twofold culture.....	114
School and multiculturalism .....	115
Teasing out key threads.....	117
<b>Chapter Six: Ashari .....</b>	<b>119</b>
A merged identity: A story of adjustment and separations .....	119
Mother-daughter bond as a means of cultural education .....	124
Resisting teenage peer pressures .....	125
Religion at the centre.....	128
Language and the obstacles to transmission .....	129
Resistance to the wider Sri Lankan community.....	130
Wanting to blend and belong .....	132

Valuing the opportunity to choose .....	132
Learning the culture of New Zealand: Treaty and multiculturalism .....	134
Reflections about equality, media, language and the significance of the Treaty .....	135
Teasing out key threads .....	139
<b>Chapter Seven: Ashshin .....</b>	<b>142</b>
Expectation of a smooth blend .....	142
Importance of knowing one's origins .....	151
Developing competence in two languages .....	153
Teaching values: tradition and shifts .....	156
Festivals and foods .....	157
Avoiding some aspects of the culture of origin .....	159
Co-operative school environment .....	160
Experience as a brown migrant .....	161
The Treaty partnership .....	163
Teasing out key threads .....	164
<b>Chapter Eight: Zuleikha .....</b>	<b>166</b>
Preserving religion .....	166
Living in a place of transition .....	172
Religion supersedes nationality .....	172
Appearances, food and festivals: prioritised to represent Muslim identity .....	176
Loss of housemaid, extended family and intimate community .....	178
Multilingual demands and loss of the mother tongue, Punjabi .....	179
A fluid, shifting space for gender .....	182
Migration as an opportunity for better parenting; 'our way of teaching' .....	183
Perception of Māori – Pākehā relations .....	186
Teasing out key threads .....	187
<b>Chapter Nine: Poush .....</b>	<b>190</b>

Keeping alive the Bangaliyana.....	190
A society within society .....	200
Tensions in language transmission.....	201
Encouragement of music as a hobby .....	203
Religion: full faith with modified practice .....	204
Festivals and celebrations: discussing otherness.....	205
Differences in values and manners.....	206
Food preferences .....	207
An aspect of Bangladeshi culture to avoid.....	207
Stereotyping, prejudice and racial identity.....	208
Support from school.....	210
Understanding biculturalism and the cultural nature of Christchurch .....	211
Teasing out the key threads.....	212
<b>Chapter Ten: Kartik.....</b>	<b>215</b>
Learning, and teaching our son to learn .....	215
Opening up to the new .....	219
Accepting the need for new solutions .....	220
Preserving Shotto's native culture without locking him away from his new world .....	221
The importance of the first language.....	222
Food and festivals - from both cultures and others .....	224
Developing values and etiquette .....	227
Reaching out to multiculturalism .....	231
Finding a way to understand the bicultural space in New Zealand.....	232
Discrimination? .....	234
Support - from the community and from school .....	235
Teasing out key threads.....	236
<b>Chapter Eleven: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>238</b>

Drawing out key themes from the case studies .....	239
Belonging..?.....	239
Language .....	239
Religion and culture.....	240
Retaining home customs.....	240
Values .....	241
Rejection of some traditional native values.....	243
March 15 <sup>th</sup> 2019 .....	243
Experiences of discrimination and complexities of racism.....	246
Multiculturalisms .....	248
Biculturalism, the Treaty and mana whenua.....	252
Relationships with schools .....	254
Implications and further areas for exploration .....	257
<b>Reference .....</b>	<b>262</b>
<b>List of Appendices.....</b>	<b>295</b>

## List of Figures, Tables and Images

Figure 2.1: Change in population in a decade.....	13
Figure 2.2 : The evolving cultural place of a first generation immigrant in Christchurch .....	15
Figure 2.3: My evolving understanding of the New Zealand context. ....	36
Figure 2.4: Perceived causes for discrimination. ....	395
Table 2.1: Increase in number of residents originally from the countries of South Asia .....	26
Table 3.1: Participants .....	551
Table 3.2: Descriptions for the painter. ....	68
Image 3.1: Baisakhi's edits .....	57
Image 3.2: Baisakhi's edits .....	58
Image 3.3: Poush's feedback .....	58
Image 3.4: the field notes as a side note to transcription. ....	61



### **Disclaimer**

I hereby state that this research is conducted and written by me and that to the best of my awareness and belief, it contains no material that has been previously published by another writer except where due reference is made. This thesis has not been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of any educational institution.

Signed:



Dated:

30.05.2019

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## Dedication

I am dedicating this thesis to my family.



To my loving husband, Shou (Isfaqur Rahman Siddiqui). For whom I always proudly sing,

“Perhaps I had a wicked childhood  
Perhaps I had a miserable youth  
But somewhere in my wicked, miserable past  
There must have been a moment of truth  
For here you are, standing there, loving me  
Whether or not you should  
So somewhere in my youth or childhood  
I must have done something good”  
(Sound of Music, 1965)

And

To my son, my ছোট্ট গোল রুটি (tiny round fluffy bread) Toppa.

## Acknowledgement

*"Let me light my lamp", says the star, "And never debate if it will help to remove the darkness".*

- **Rabindranath Tagore**

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the ways immigrant/migrant parents transmit and teach culture to their offspring. It investigates and reports six case studies of South Asian migrant/immigrant parents' perceptions, experiences and intentions in *teaching* culture to their children. It considers two separate but complementary aspects of culture: the family's original culture and the culture they have immigrated into. Within the second dimension it examines how these migrant families position themselves in terms of the Treaty of Waitangi and the interface of Māori and Pākehā identities and in terms of a growing sense of multiculturalism.

In New Zealand, migration is causing tensions, which, despite local differences, are in many ways similar around the world. Migration itself occurs for many reasons: some are voluntary because of work, study or lifestyle opportunities, and some are consequences of being a refugee from war or persecution. Irrespective of the cause of migration, the arrival of migrants into our social system poses a challenge. Its impact on the makeup of our societies is a topic that provokes intense, even heated, discussions.

In a multicultural classroom, while the presence of students from different cultures creates the need to deal with cultural diversity, many teachers still see dealing with such diversity as a challenge. The inability of many immigrants to speak English and their struggles in co-operating with the school environment is mostly highlighted in the literature. This research explores an alternative view to the dominant image of immigrant parents as presenting challenges within the education system and offers six cases of parents who, in various ways, actively engage in their children's learning, sometimes in collaboration with the school and sometimes independently.

A qualitative approach has been used to elicit detailed information from participants and to understand specific contexts, actions and perspectives. The method of data collection has been extended unstructured interviews with six parents who are originally South Asian and now living in Christchurch New Zealand. The participants are the first generation immigrant parents who arrived here from five different South Asian regional countries Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Each of the parents has been considered as each separate case of how they are transmitting culture to their children and how they are enabling their children to acculturate into the new country.

The way of presentation of each participant's narrative is that of a dramatic monologue followed by thematic analysis of the narrative and synopsis of the key themes have emerged. Each narrative represents a snapshot of time. The findings do not claim to be generalisable but they reveal a range of differences in attitude and expectation as well as some similarities. They are offered as provocations for further discussion and investigations as well as useful examples of how migrant parents see themselves and their children within the society they have migrated into. The conclusion offers what these narrative provoke in considerations of racism, multiculturalism, the bicultural character of New Zealand and the ways schools and teachers can meet the needs of children of such parents.



## Chapter one: Introduction

This thesis investigates and reports case studies of South Asian migrant/immigrant parents' experiences and intentions in *teaching* culture to their children. It is situated in Christchurch New Zealand, and it considers two separate but complementary aspects of culture: the family's original culture and the culture they have immigrated into, that of New Zealand. The study was undertaken because of a need for schools and society to hear how parents understand their role in teaching their children to live within, and sometimes between, two cultures and what aspirations they have with their children in a cross-cultural context. The narratives of six parents are reported here and so the findings do not claim to be generalisable but they reveal a range of differences in attitude and expectation as well as some similarities. They are offered as provocations for further discussion and investigations as well as useful examples of how migrant parents see themselves and their children within the society they have migrated into.

Like any case study, this investigation report is situated in time and place. Each parent in the case studies acknowledges some degree of evolution in their own thinking over time and that evolution will doubtless continue in the future. Conditions in society also evolve. So experiences need to be read within the specified context. They may also continue to be analysed by readers in terms of shifting contexts. One such shift in context has occurred in the last month of writing this thesis.

### 1.40pm Friday March 15<sup>th</sup> 2019

A gunman walks through the doors of Al Noor mosque in Christchurch and guns down as many people as he can reach. He drives onto Linwood mosque and shoots more people until he is tackled and then runs away. Shortly afterwards he was arrested. We hear on the news later that fifty people are dead and at least forty others have been taken to the hospital, many in critical condition.

Initially many of us feel fear and horror. Slowly aspects of security return as the city shows overwhelming solidarity. Nevertheless, the lives have been taken and the impact remains.



The events of the shooting and of the following weeks have been widely broadcast and reported throughout the world (TV NZ news, International News, for example<sup>1</sup>). They have changed many aspects of local consciousness, although time will show in what ways and how much. The research reported here was conducted before this event, and most of this report had also been completed by that time. I was therefore faced with the challenge of how to position my research in the light of this event. I have decided to present the findings without seeking to edit or add to them on the basis of the event. The case studies, therefore, need to be seen as a snapshot of the time before March 15<sup>th</sup>. Without a doubt, some of the participants may wish to focus on some different things now and may perceive the community they describe differently in some ways. However, it would be artificial to rewrite parts of the case studies to include recent events, and perhaps impossible to request the participants to contribute further comments. Moreover, although some things will have changed, the issues raised and their discussions still have relevance to New Zealand in the time post- March 15<sup>th</sup>, however, the future may evolve. And perhaps they also have relevance to other parts of the world. Therefore I restrict any discussion involving the shootings of March 15<sup>th</sup> to this introduction and to the concluding discussion in Chapter Eleven.

### **Migration as a global issue and a local one**

Globally, migration is a major contemporary issue. In many countries, it is explicitly named as a problem (Henley, 2018; Peace, 2018). Racial tensions have been widely reported in media (for instance, Bouattia, 2018; “Mariam Moustafa”, 2018) and research (for instance, Chakraborti, 2018). In Britain, concerns about the increasing migrant population were reported to have been a major factor in the *Leave* vote that led to Brexit (Bulman, 2017). In Germany, where migrants were welcomed in 2015 there are repeated reports of not only protest from far-right groups (Connolly, 2018) but also of discrimination within the work sector, both between those with long-term Germanic ancestry and immigrants and also between different immigrant groups (Prange, 2019) The impact of the *migrant crisis* on schools is also variously discussed internationally by researchers and published reports (Chen & Feng, 2013; European Commission, 2008; Heckmann, 2008).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/one-new-zealands-darkest-days-prime-ministers-message-after-christchurch-mass-shootings>  
<https://edition.cnn.com/2019/03/14/asia/christchurch-mosque-shooting-intl/index.html>

As indicated above, in some countries it is overtly articulated as a problem. Other countries, such as Sweden (Skodo, 2018) have been more prone to articulating an accepting attitude to cultural difference and to welcome migration, but they too have sometimes experienced difficulties in turning policy and perhaps general goodwill into workable reality (Bershidsky, 2019).

Migration itself occurs for many reasons: some migrations are voluntary because of work, study or lifestyle opportunities, and some are consequences of being a refugee from war or persecution. Irrespective of the cause of migration, the arrival of migrants into our social system poses a challenge. Its impact on the makeup of our societies is a topic that provokes intense, even heated, discussions.

In New Zealand, as in other migrant receiving countries, migration is causing tensions, which, despite local differences, are in many ways similar around the world. Every country has its own particular cultural characteristics and traditional cultural values and so has particular challenges for its immigrants. In New Zealand, the Treaty of Waitangi guarantees indigenous people's rights and leads New Zealand to define itself as a bicultural country (Hayward, 2012), with implications for education, social practices, law and language. Ideologically the Treaty implies partnership of Māori, the indigenous people, and Pākehā, a term loosely encompassing colonial and post-colonial immigrants. This bicultural identity both challenges migrants in a variety of ways and is also frequently challenged by them. So too other countries each have their own cultural expectations and challenges.

The spiralling number of migrants creates pressure and evolves new complexities in every aspect of social interaction and education is one key area of pressure. The pressure impacts on both migrants and local people. As a migrant myself, if I try to picture the complexity of migration, I can say that the first generation migrants with a wide range of socio-cultural differences are entering host countries like a ray of light coming through one side of a prism and breaking into the colours of the rainbow. However, the new country is receiving and including a hundred thousand vibrations of colours coming out from many prisms. It is certainly a significant struggle for both sides to face the challenges of multiculturalism.

Outsiders coming into a country find it difficult to understand the range of often silent expectations. There need to be both minor and major levels of cultural understandings and tolerances needed in order to prevent offensive transgressions. At a minor level, it might be

about, for instance, not spitting on the street or not complaining about music played till midnight. At more significant levels it may be about gender roles, religious observances or styles of interpersonal communication. The arrival of large groups of foreigners, who may see their new country as a neutral territory, increases the complexity of already complicated social relationships. Perhaps from the local people's perceptions, their country is not the home of right of the new arrivals: it is not their motherland. From many local people's viewpoint, first generation migrants come and disrespect, intentionally or by oversight, local values and take control of the resources of the land. New Zealand, as well as other host countries, have an explicit history of such acts of colonisation and conquest.

However many migrants may explain that their actions arise because they do not know the culture, precisely because it is not their ancestral home. They acknowledge they do not have the history and they have not been involved in all the transitions of the land. So they may not understand the cultural essence and may exploit the land unintentionally, or even in some cases intentionally. Such tensions and conflicts that come through ignorance and perhaps alienation are characteristic of what the media has called the migrant crisis in the west. They also characterise the experiences of migrants in New Zealand.

### **A gap in the existing research**

In a multicultural classroom, while the presence of students from different cultures creates the need to deal with cultural diversity, many teachers still see dealing with such diversity as a challenge. In the face of the continuously evolving needs of cultural inclusion, are our teachers being enabled to cope with children and young people of different cultures in our classrooms? Are our curricula encompassing of their needs? Do we know how to create positive cross-cultural interactions among students? Do we know how to engage migrant parents with our schooling system? What do we know about migrant parents' educational aspirations for their children? New Zealand sees itself as welcoming to other cultures. However, its schooling system is still struggling to fully integrate migrant children and to ensure that their needs are understood and met.

Research as well as popular media suggest that recent migrants are creating a range of complex expectations in the education system, and are the subject of a wide range of research projects (for example, Bitew & Ferguson, 2010; Gibson, 2000; Glick & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Hourahan, 2000; Levels, Dronkers & Kraaykamp, 2008). Comparative research

findings indicate an inequality in academic achievements between immigrant and non-immigrant students in New Zealand (Glick & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Levels, Dronkers & Kraaykamp, 2008). In many cases, the educational achievement of migrant students is falling below the so-called expected level and the parents are treated as one of the reasons of their children's shortcomings (Bitew & Ferguson, 2010; Gibson, 2000; Glick & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). Immigrant parents pass their customs, culture, values and educational backgrounds on to their children's development and so may usefully be seen as adjuncts to the educational process, and have the potential to assist in their children's schooling. But it is the inability of many immigrant parents to speak English and their struggles in co-operating with schools that are mostly highlighted in the literature (Bitew & Ferguson, 2010; Hourahan, 2000; Gibson, 2000). There is, therefore, need for further studies that will explore the context of what gives rise to these inequalities and how they might be resolved.

In contrast to this fear of diversity and to the concept of difference as deficit, Guo (2011, 2012a, 2012b) advocates the need for supporting pre-service teachers, school teachers and administrators of Canada to modify their depiction of cultural diversity from a conservative perspective to recognise immigrant students' and parents' knowledge, cultural, language and religion, and to make use of them as resources of education. Comparatively fewer studies are focusing on parents' perspectives, their hopes and intentions and on their active processes of passing on culture to their children. Especially for the South Asian immigrant group, there is yet little research that reports parents' voices focusing on their aspirations and practices in teaching culture within a New Zealand context. However, for multicultural understanding, it is important for all sides to understand each other. Otherwise, assumptions are made and they may be false. Immigrant families potentially carry noteworthy strengths of strong family ties, deep-rooted beliefs in education, positivity for the future, and also have developed resources of resilience related to the process of migration. Therefore this research aims to fill part of the gap by eliciting and reporting rich accounts of immigrant parents' processes of culture transmission and cultural learning. This research sets out to explore alternative views to the overriding image of immigrant parents as inadequate and as presenting challenges within the education system; rather it aims to explore their way of teaching cultural values, and sharing their expertise, views, motives and practice.

### **Methodological approach**

A qualitative approach has been used, so that, as Stake (2005) suggests, a detailed description is generated in order to develop a rich understanding of specific contexts, actions and perspectives. The participants are the first generation immigrant parents in Christchurch, New Zealand, who arrived here from five different South Asian regional countries. The parents have been purposefully selected: there are six people from a variety of South Asian contexts: from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The two main criteria for selecting them were that they needed to be from South Asian countries and they would be willing to participate in this research and commit to lengthy interviews over an extended period of time. The reasons behind selecting parents from such background are: firstly, despite being one of the fastest growing immigrant group there is a shortage of research focusing on such parents in education within a New Zealand context and secondly, it is directly related to my positionality within the research context.

Each of the parents has been considered as each separate case of how they are transmitting culture to their children and how they are enabling their children to acculturate into the new country. Each case involves longitudinal tracking of the participant over three years. As described in detail in Chapter Three, I have investigated these cases in their natural setting using extended unstructured, open-ended dialogues with each parent in order to generate thick description (Geertz, 1973, 1983; Greenblatt, 1997) and I have presented the findings in the form of personalised narratives. I have used repeated rewriting as a way of meaning-making while working with my information. And after writing each of the stories many times, I have structured the case studies presented here. The way of presentation of these narratives is that of a dramatic monologue followed by thematic analysis of the narrative and synopsis of the key themes have been produced. To offer a visual impression of the participants, character paintings has been produced and these accompany the monologues. In this way combination of painting and monologue are intended to present sense of the participant's live voice. Each narrative represents a snapshot of time.

As is further discussed in Chapter Four I have avoided proposing any overarching theoretical lens in collecting or interpreting the data that forms the narrative in each case. A focus on recording people's life stories, as Chase (2011) notes, "means tempering the academic impulse to generalise, or to impose theoretical concepts...on people's stories". While my discussion of their stories does consider implications for education, both in terms of

schooling and of growing social awareness, I have carefully avoided the imposition of a pre-determined theoretical framework for collating and presenting their first-person narratives.

### **Selection of South Asian parents as a focus**

The term *South Asian* has been used in this thesis, not as a single cultural representative unit, but rather as identifying people from the geographic region of South Asia. As is seen in the reported case studies the term is valued by many South Asians when they are positioned in a mainstream western context. Sometimes such migrants create a relative comfort zone based on their similarities in some aspects of their native values and cultural practices and prefer to recognise their identity as South Asian when they are abroad. Some of those similarities in their cultural aspects have been noted in popular media and studies, although those are certainly not the only defining edge of such cultures. This research reports the multiplicity of cultural outlooks that have been banded together as South Asian. More description related to this terminology will be found in Chapter Two.

### **Migration and immigration**

Both the terms *migration* and *immigration* are used throughout the thesis. Immigration is defined by the action of travelling to a destination country with the intention of living permanently whereas migration is considered as a movement of people to a new place in order to have a better living condition in a way that may not be permanent (“Immigration,” 2019; “Migration,” 2019). However, in public debates and even among researchers the terms are often interchangeable (Anderson, & Blinder, 2013). Here I use both terms. Because some of my participants consider *themselves* as more especially a migrant or an immigrant, I use the relevant term in referring to them. However, participants did not often make a clear distinction between the two terms and the conditions they described and the reactions they perceived appear to apply to those who are seen as *different* within the wider community rather than being differentiated by knowledge of their long term purpose or of their immigration status. I, therefore, do not differentiate between migrant and immigrant when discussing participants’ perceptions of how South Asians are viewed by the wider society of Christchurch.

### **Concepts of multiculturalism**

Like many other discourses related to the concept of culture, multiculturalism has been defined through various lenses. In any discussion related to multicultural education, as Banks (1974) states, the meanings of multiculturalism need to be clarified. The concepts of multiculturalism, as proposed by various scholars (for example Kalman, 2009; Multiculturalism, n.d; Malik, 2010; Pope, 1995; Singham, 2006; Taylor, 1994) focuses on some degree of recognition and inclusion of cultural differences, for instance based on ethnicity, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and the term widely advocates the exercise of equal respect to every cultural groups within a community. Further discussion is included in Chapter Four.

### **My positionality as a researcher**

I am originally from Bangladesh; a South Asian regional country. After completing my tertiary education from the University of Dhaka, I worked for a couple of years and then I started my PhD at the University of Canterbury. I live in Christchurch along with my son and my husband. The cultural place of Christchurch was fairly unknown to me before arrival. After immigration, I gradually started to understand more about it and I acknowledge this process of learning is a continuously evolving one. I am a parent of a boy who is going to primary school. While I am living in New Zealand, apart from my identity of being an international student, I am a South Asian parent. I am supporting my son to learn his native culture and also to fit into Christchurch society and so I share some of the experiences of the participants in this research.

This identity supported me in this thesis to pass through the door of their invisible boundary and become an insider for the participants. Maybe parents in my case studies would not talk so openly to a researcher who came from a background which they saw as mainstream Kiwi. Just like peeling an onion I could reach inside some of the layers with which they always keep themselves wrapped to create a persona in front of those they call outsiders. Although all information has been collected in the English language, because I am efficient in communicating in three of the most common languages of this region, I could develop comfortable communication with them and bring an insider's ear to their narrations. I have further discussed my positionality in Chapters Two and Three.

## Outline of chapters

This thesis contains eleven chapters. The current chapter has opened up the discussion of this thesis with a recent event that needed acknowledgement. It has identified a gap in existing research and explained the significance of the study. It has briefly outlined my methodological approach, explained my use of the term of South Asian, discussed my use of the terms migrant and immigrant, highlighted complexities in the definition of multiculturalism and identified my positionality within the research context.

In Chapter Two, the context of this research is presented. At the beginning of this chapter, the readers will find an explanation of *place* which is very important to this research. Firstly, it involves a description of the geographical place where this thesis has been situated, in Christchurch, New Zealand, and other aspects of this place which are beyond geographical dimensions. Then I examine immigrants' cultural place and how it has an evolving character. I then offer a conceptual framework for this research, involving participants' evolving sense of place within the overlays of their home contexts and those they find on migration. I further discuss my own positionality.

Chapter Three describes the methodological approach. It specifies the choices I have made selecting the method of this study, explains how the participants have been purposefully selected, gives a detail description of the process I followed to gather information from the participants, explains how I analyse the information and explains the way of writing the narratives to present the thesis. This chapter also addresses the ethical considerations I have followed while conducting the research.

Review of relevant literature is reported in Chapter Four. First, I present the research studies, done in a New Zealand context, which addressed parents originally from South Asia and their children's education. Then I examine research from other national contexts. I also address important writings related to the Treaty of Waitangi and the cultural context of New Zealand through the lenses of various Māori and Pākehā scholars. With the support of the literature, I argue the need for further research about the parenting by South Asian parents and in particular about how they teach their children about the cultural overlays that they live within.

Chapters Five to Chapter Ten provide the six case studies. In each of these chapters, I present a dramatic monologue in the first person voice of the participant. Following the



monologue, an analytic discussion of the narrative is provided. At the end of each chapter, I have pulled out the key themes of the case.

In Chapter Eleven, I draw together the six cases and further discuss their implications. Here, I problematise issues that emerge through the cases, and examine implications.

## Chapter Two: Context

This chapter examines and discusses the context in which this study is located. It involves descriptions of the geographical place and immigrants' cultural place, other aspects of the context, the conceptual framework, my understanding of the context, South Asia within the research and my positionality.

### Place

It is important to understand the importance of place in this research. Greenwood (2018) stressed on the importance of explaining the place in research and argued that it is useful for students to give a description of place in their PhD theses to help the readers “to apprehend the situated and contextualised nature of the research” (p. 131). And so I am providing the description of the place in the following discussion.

The first place is the geographical place in which the parents in my research are located. The study is grounded within a New Zealand context. The geographic place where this research is situated is Christchurch, which is the biggest city of the Canterbury region of South Island and the second largest city of this country. The first inhabitants of Ōtautahi, currently named Christchurch, were the moa-hunters who used to live in this place from approximately 1000 AD (Christchurch City Libraries, 2018). They lived here for hundreds of years before the North Islanders entered this place. A North Island tribe subsumed the moa hunters and established tribe currently known as Ngāi Tahu.

Ngāi Tahu rooted their home in this place from about 1700 AD, and they established significant history and culture in this land, which is spiritually connected to their heritage (Our Story, 2017). Prior to the European settlement, the names of different places of this city were not the same as they are at present. For instance, Puāri was the name of the place which is now the central city, situated at the banks of the Ōtākaro River, which is now known as the Avon River.

European contact to this place started around the early eighteen hundreds. A growing number of European whaling and sealing ships came to the Banks Peninsula at this time. During the 1840s the first settlement on the Canterbury Plains by the Deans family of Scottish origin made a milestone, and their first farm at the Riccarton Bush is now a famous park within the Christchurch City (Christchurch City Libraries, 2018).

The first planned migration was organised by the Canterbury Association which was formed in 1848. The first planned settlers from England arrived here on December 1850, brought by “The First Four Ships”, the *Randolph*, the *Cressy*, the *Sir George Seymour* and the *Charlotte Jane* (The First, n.d.; Rice, & Sharfe, 2008). For a long time, Christchurch and its surrounding region were acknowledged as a very English place (NZ History, 2018; Wilson, 2015).

Many street names and place names of Christchurch still come straight from England. The Christchurch City Libraries (2018) website has a list of street names of Christchurch and their roots where I have found many of the names of the streets represent attachment to British Empire; for instance, Gibbon Street was named after Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) who was an English historian and writer, Byron Street was named after on the famous British poet Gordon Byron (1788-1824), Wordsworth street was named after one of the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850). As well as the names, before the two severe earthquakes on 2010 and 2011, the style of the majority of the central city architectures, parks and tourist attractions made this city a slice of England in the southern hemisphere (Wilson, 2015). After, the devastating earthquakes, the city lost most of the heritage buildings. Many other architectures were damaged tragically. Wilson (2015) noted that after losing many of the heritage architectures, the rebuilding plan of the city is now focusing more on capturing this city’s character like a garden city rather than an English city.

The horrific earthquakes initially took life from the city. New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage (2017) reported that the earthquake on 22 February 2011 killed 185 people, and several thousand were injured. The trauma of the two earthquakes decreased the attraction of the city for migrants. Although Canterbury Region is the second largest in terms of a net gain of migrants, initially after the earthquake migrant arrivals decreased and departures increased (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Many people moved to another city, and some left the country. However, with time, the situation started to stabilise; perhaps the major reason behind the renewed increase of migrants can be attributed to the Christchurch rebuild (Christchurch City Council, 2018).

The number of overseas workers increased to meet the need of rebuilding the city in construction, engineering and trades. McDonald (2018) reported that many of the workers found this city a good place to settle down, and they made a significant contribution to the recovery of the earlier population loss. The following figure, provided by Christchurch City

Council (2018), shows the annual change in the population of three neighbouring districts. Between Christchurch City, Selwyn and Waimakariri, larger Christchurch had a significant loss in population during the earthquakes, and eventually, it regained the population.

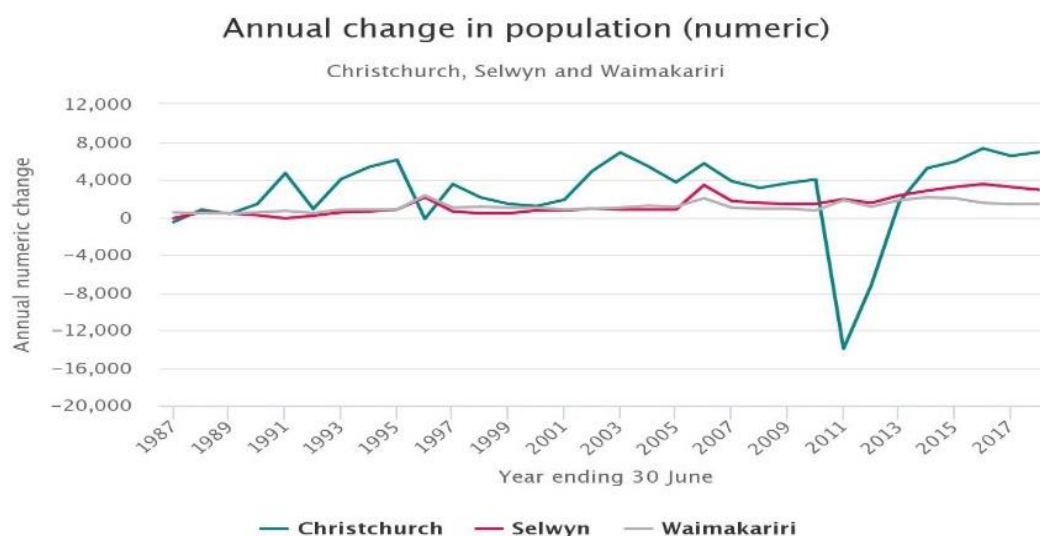


Figure 2.1: Change in population in a decade.

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Another source of migrant intake is international students. One of the big institutions in this city is the University of Canterbury. Many of the students initially come to study at the university, and in some cases, they gradually decide to settle. Some other migrants come straight into business. Many of the participants of my study were not here at the period of the earthquake, but they are the part of the rebuild. A few of the participants did have the experience of those horrific earthquake days, but they were among those who did not leave the place after the earthquakes.

However, place is not only geographical. Tuan (2001) referred to human experience while explaining the concept of *space* and *place*. He explained that space contains the nature of openness, whereas the place gives a sense of stability; the abstract space becomes a place when people start to experience and know it better. He defined experience and states, “Experience is a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality. These modes range from the more direct and passive senses of smell, taste, and touch, to active visual perception and the indirect mode of symbolization” (p. 8). Experience is very important for my thesis as I have conceptualised and narrated the participants’ experience the way they have explained it.

Therefore, place can be considered in terms beyond geographical; it exists in the way people experience and understand their role identity of functioning in the community they develop. In this way, the participants in this research not only connect to the geographical place where the research is situated, but also to their experiential places: that of their native land and that of the Christchurch they experience. Later in this chapter, I further examine the layers of place that are relevant to this account of their narratives. I used the term cultural place in my thesis to make highlight the relationship of experience of place to culture. The readers will find relevant discussion related to cultural place in Chapter Three and Chapter Four.

### **The context of schooling**

The conditions and experience of schooling constitute further aspects of the context. After their first arrival in New Zealand, migrant families with young children experience their first and most lasting interaction with the local community through their children's schools. The schools in New Zealand are receiving a steady flow of migrants. To make room for the new arrivals, existing schools are being restructured, and new ones are being built. Many of the new schools established in recent years are the results of the various migrations, internal and external.

Particularly in the Christchurch context, after the two earthquakes, many of the existing schools were extensively damaged. With the support of the local community and educational leaders, the government New Zealand is newly building and redeveloping 115 schools in greater Christchurch (education.govt.nz, 2018). Many of the new schools are established to meet the educational needs of areas with population growth. For instance, Halswell West Primary school, a new school, was scheduled to open on 2022 but the date has changed to 2019 because the area is experiencing rapid growth and the government wants to ensure children attend a local school (Beehive.govt.nz, 2017). Collins (2018) reports that the more populated city Auckland is facing the pressure of rapidly growing resident numbers in the city too and has planned to build twelve or more schools which will accommodate up to 38,000 more students by 2030.

As discussed further in the Chapter Four, although the number of migrants is increasing, there is inequality in academic achievement between immigrant and non-immigrant students, and further development of effective teaching is required (Glick & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007;

Levels, Dronkers & Kraaykamp, 2008). For meeting the needs for the Māori and the Pasifika<sup>2</sup> students, models have been developed, and various steps have taken in recent years, and the work is still in progress (Ka Hikitia, 2018; Pasifika Education Plan, 2018). However, the needs of immigrant communities still need more attention from researchers.

The research that has been carried out mostly focused on the deficit positioning of immigrant communities, not only in New Zealand, but globally, as is described further in Chapter Four. Many of the research studies have positioned the parents of immigrant students as one of the various reasons for this perceived deficiency. The knowledge, culture and practise of immigrant parents deserves attention. By exploring and narrating six parents' experiences of how they are passing on their culture to their children and navigating between their native and new cultures, I seek to contribute to the development of a better understanding of the practices and needs of immigrant parents.

### Conceptual framework

Figure 2.2 illustrates the conceptual framework of my thesis. This is a visual presentation of how I have seen the cultural place of the participants while conducting this research.

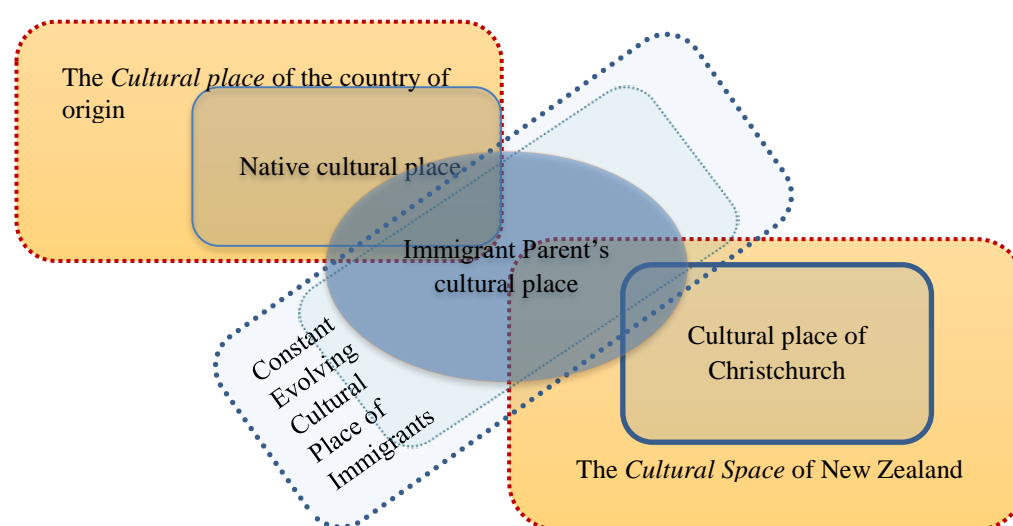


Figure 2.2: The evolving cultural place of a first generation immigrant in Christchurch

<sup>2</sup> People living in New Zealand who have migrated from the Pacific Islands or who identify with the Pacific Islands because of ancestry or heritage.

The place of origin, where they developed their knowledge, belief, values all through their life before migration, is the first place immigrants hold in their consciousness. It encompasses immigrants' first experiences of culture, and so is an immigrant's original cultural place. The parents in this study have come from five countries. Those countries have some commonalities as well as significant distinctness. The cultural place of the home country, as described further in this chapter, is certainly neither static nor homogenous. Although a country is a wide space and a generalised concept, the participant parents in this thesis do identify their country of origin as their home, their own place. Their attachment to their country of origin is respectively strong, and they bring the elements of this cultural place with them into the new land.

Within the cultural place of their home country, I then signify the native cultural place, the exact place and the surrounding they have been brought up in. That place too is not unproblematic. It represents the values and culture they received from their immediate family, community and social structure. And so their ethnicity comes in here. For instance, a person who comes from Pakistan may belong to Punjabi, Pashtun, Sindhi or any other ethnicity. Every ethnicity has distinctness. In Baisakhi's story, she has a strong sense of place. She describes her place is in her village in Tamil Nadu and repeatedly compared her place with other spaces in India and said how it is distinct. I have provided more discussion later in this chapter.

The second cultural place is that of Christchurch. It has grown with its particular history and heritage. However, it often appears as an opaque space for the newcomers before the entrance. At the beginning of their period of immigration, it is perceived as the foreign and uniform cultural space of New Zealand. It is abstract. It has less specifics in terms of local characteristics: for the new immigrant, it is just a space.

The third place is the cultural place of the immigrant parent, for each parent, it starts to evolve with living in the host country. For first generation immigrants, it is always evolving and shifting shape between, how they have imagined it and how they are actually experiencing it. It shifts with how they are navigating themselves through all the changes in their lives, and with how they are bringing change to it. It has the nature of fluidness as the new members of the cultural place of Christchurch are continuously learning about the cultures in it, are accepting and/or rejecting them, and are transmitting their evolving

understandings to their children. In terms of my participants, their identity as a South Asian evolves in this place.

This concept of being a South Asian did not have significant meaning inside their own countries of South Asia. But once they come to New Zealand, an identity of *South Asian* has somehow been created. Not always but sometimes, they feel comfortable to fitting into it. One reason it is comfortable is because it defines some of the elements of their identity, such as food, dress (to some extent), festivals, and so on. It explains their values better than being with other migrant groups such as Chinese or Africans or Indonesians.

Nevertheless, sometimes they want to be *South Asians*, and sometimes they do not. For instance, sometimes they identify themselves less as South Asian and more as part of a religious community, such as being Hindu, Muslim or Christian. Sometimes they identify themselves as *New Zealanders*, and sometimes they say the New Zealanders are the *others*. In some cases, they may at one point of their life as an immigrant have identified themselves as one of their own country's community, but later they shifted to more complex constructions of their identity. As discussed in the next chapter, this research captures a snapshot of time; things are shifting. My participants may not identify themselves in the same ways next year or in five years' time. In as much as place is not just geographical locations, but also contains histories, stories and practises of community, the sense of place the participants in this study occupy is a dynamic shifting one.

*Native culture* is a term that came into this study repeatedly. To unpack the term, I discussed it with the colleagues from my learning community. During one of our meetings, I asked them, "What do you mean by native culture? How do you define your native culture?" Initially, some of them shrugged. They paused for some moments and slowly, the discussion started. Their spontaneous reaction helped me to understand the complexity of the notion and their discussion contributed to conceptualising the idea. I include some part of that discussion to illustrate the diversity of conceptualisations of native culture in my doctoral community, which is composed of academic migrants as well as New Zealanders.

*Sagir: Native culture is belonging to land, culture and, recently, language. To me it is related to my native land, from where I born and grow, the culture of that place and my language.*



*Ashiq: I think Native culture is how we do things, our religion, our food habits, our dress and costumes and every other things: those give our identity a boundary to grow within that.*

*Lamia: Well, it is interesting Ashiq that you said the word 'our' in your description when you said native culture. As a white Pākehā New Zealander, I exclude myself from that box of native culture. Even though I was married into a Māori family, so for me it is about making sure everybody understands colonialism in the history of power struggle and hegemony behind all of that stuff. As a mother of Māori children, they need to know, and all children need to know the story of New Zealand from both sides of the ends.*

*Aaban: Native culture is habits for me. Showing habits specific to any geographical locations could be a native culture. The habits that were created by a specific group of people who locate themselves in a specific geographical place in the world. It can be a country or a place within that country. Like, they say, all Arabs are originally from the Middle East, but all Middle Eastern are not Arabs.*

*Robi: I think native culture is a mutual understanding on some set-beliefs or some customs in a specific social context where people have common language, cultural customs and social practises.*

*Eva: I think I am agreeing with Lamia a little bit in positionality. It is because of my own history of growing up in New Zealand where the claim of Māori as Tangata Whenua the indigenous people is such a part of our culture identity, that I define the nativeness in terms of indigenous people Tangata Whenua. And I define them very much in New Zealand terms of Māori and later colonial immigrants. But I am also looking very hard at how do we define our nativeness, as opposed to asking who is native. And so I claim a certain nativeness in New Zealand even though my birth is in somewhere else. Because of the way that my understanding of life is been shaped by the culture I live and grow in. And I belong in this in some ways more than I belong to what would be my native culture which was my birth culture. On the other hand, I still have affinities to that. So I want to contest this. I would say, it so depends on the context where I speak from.*

The dialogues are fascinating for my study as they highlight variety as well as some congruence in conceptualising by different people of the notion of native culture. The member of the group addressed it in many ways, but the theme of specific *place and context* was brought up variously by Sagir, Aaban and Robi, whereas Ashiq prioritised the community and the boundary that community sets to grow the practices within it. All of them discussed many elements of the native culture such as customs, religion, language, belief, food, and habits. However, in contrast to these four international members of the group, Lamia and Eva, two New Zealanders, discussed more the complex cultural composition of this country and how they are positioning themselves, negotiating between aspects of the bicultural partnership and stressing the importance of passing on their understandings to the next generation. Eva argued that the concept of native culture could be explained through many lenses, and it would depend on which lens a person is looking through. Intriguingly she claims her nativeness more from the country where she has lived most of her life rather than from her birthplace.

In the following discussion, I briefly describe the particular place where each of the participants of my study has come from. I draw on how they have described their native place and main strings to their native culture that they consider they are connected with.

*Baisakhi's* place of native culture is her village in Tamil Nadu. Her religious affiliation gives her an identity of being Hindu. She identifies that her nativeness comes from the village where she has brought up, from the caste she belongs to. The people from her caste are rooted in thirty-two villages, all situated close to Baisakhi's village. They respect a rule to marry only in between their own caste; hence, they all have familial relations to one another. The inhabitants of her place are mostly farmers. She grew up in an area that is full of mango trees, coconut trees, paddy fields. She is very sensitive to nature, plants, agriculture and all the living and non-living things of her land. One of her comment about the coconut shows her respect. She states, "A coconut tree is often called the *Kalpavriksha* or the tree that grants all blessings. When I came to New Zealand, and the first time I tasted a coconut here, I literally cried, missing my home. In the last twelve years, I never made coconut chutney as nothing can replace the taste of our coconut! Back home, whoever breaks a coconut would be very careful not to waste even a drop of coconut water; it is this much precious for us." Language, food, dress, customs, values and many other aspects of her caste culture bring the sense of home to Baisakhi.

*Ashari* comes from the coastal place of Sri Lanka. She finds the string is alive that attaches her to the native culture which is real in the place where her extended family practises Catholicism with their church community on the tropical coast. She acknowledges the importance of her native culture in her life. However, after travelling through different phases of her life and integrating into Christchurch society, she repeatedly states that her home is here and Sri Lanka has become like a holiday destination to her. Religion is the keystone to Ashari. Her family values have gained their shape by focusing on religion and the social practices that come from religion. She acknowledges those values respectfully.

*Ashshin*'s native place is in the city of Kathmandu in Nepal. She is a city girl and admires the modernisation and urbanisation of the capital city. She has a strong bond to her place of origin; she became emotionally disturbed after the devastating earthquake in Nepal in 2015. She had to take a break from work for some days to get settled. Other members of her family live close to each other at Kathmandu. Ashshin acknowledges that the old buildings standing close to each other where all of her cousins and relatives grew up is her home. She still gets that feeling of home when she comes closer to the street and those houses. The native food, language, festivals, social practices are addressed as the native cultures she brings here. These aspects make her proud to announce, "Hi! I am Ashshin from Kathmandu."

*Zuleikha* talks about her home place as the ancestral home where she was born in Punjab, Pakistan. She cannot think of anything outside her big joint family house surroundings, where her father was born and his father too. She got married to a man who has also forever lived in a joint family system. They are the first from both of the houses who have come out of that system. Although she cherishes the memory of living in a joint family structure, she acknowledges the freedom of a nuclear family she is experiencing here. Zuleikha regards her religion of Islam in her family with highest value. Her country offers her a sense of being Muslim. She misses the sense of a home place of being a Muslim strongly, and she finds that peace to some extent in her Mosque community in Christchurch. She explains the aspects of her native culture she is nurturing here as wrapped with all elements which are needed to be a good Muslim.

*Poush* identifies her native place as her home district in Bangladesh. Her parents live there, she became an adult there, her university where she found the love of her life also is there. She feels strong affection to that place, and here, when she meets anyone who came from that district, she feels amazed and takes special care of that person. She never stops relating to

various elements of day to day life, which are “extraordinary” in that area. She states the people in her area are very “culturally minded”, and notes that music and arts have been appreciated over hundreds of years in that area. She often says, “Music is in our blood, the people from our area get music from their birth.” She brings that flavour in her home in Christchurch with her music, food, home décor and hospitality. She trained herself to make traditional sweets, ‘*mishti*<sup>3</sup>’ for which her area is famous. All three members of her family look at music as a significant part of their lives. Also, she pays her honest respect to her religion and family values.

*Kartik* also is from a capital city, but he is from Bangladesh. For most of the time of his life, he has lived in Dhaka city. All through his life, he has lived in different rental places; his family has never owned a home. Hence his school, college, university, shops, tea stalls, the big crowded fish market, different streets and roads, the bells of the rickshaws, the flavour of the city when the first rain starts after the long heating summer months, all of these give him the sense of home place. A lover of travel, *Kartik* had to stay in different places of Bangladesh due to his previous work and hobby. So sometimes he talks about the small one-room flat, where he stayed for a year while working for the *Rohingya*<sup>4</sup> refugees at the border area, as his home. Despite the exhausting job of supporting refugees who were enduring various miseries, his memory of walking through the green hill tracks and on the heated sand of the longest beach of the world often calls him to come back. Music, language, values, celebrations, are highlighted in *Kartik*’s story as the major aspects of his native culture.

### **My understanding of the New Zealand context**

In this section, I present my current interpretation of the New Zealand context. I have found it necessary to document my understanding about New Zealand’s history and present context and I recognise that various writers over different eras have documented and interpreted them from their own lenses. I have read a range of writings, attended a Treaty workshop at my university, attended different seminars, lectures, visited the museum, and attended different programmes on Waitangi Day to enrich my understanding about the complexity of this

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<sup>3</sup> Traditional Bangladeshi dessert which has a variety of kinds. Some of them is widely common in other South Asian countries. For instance Gulab Jamun (locally called Golapjam/ Pantoa/ Lal Mohon/ Lal Mishti) is one of the kinds of Mishti which is a deep-fried fresh cheese ball, soaked in an aromatic sugar syrup.

<sup>4</sup> People who originally resided in Rakhine State, Myanmar, and are now forced to become refugees.

context. I am writing it as my *current* understanding because I have observed that it is not a fixed conception and there may have a shift later on. I am aware such understandings are not absolute and may evolve with time.

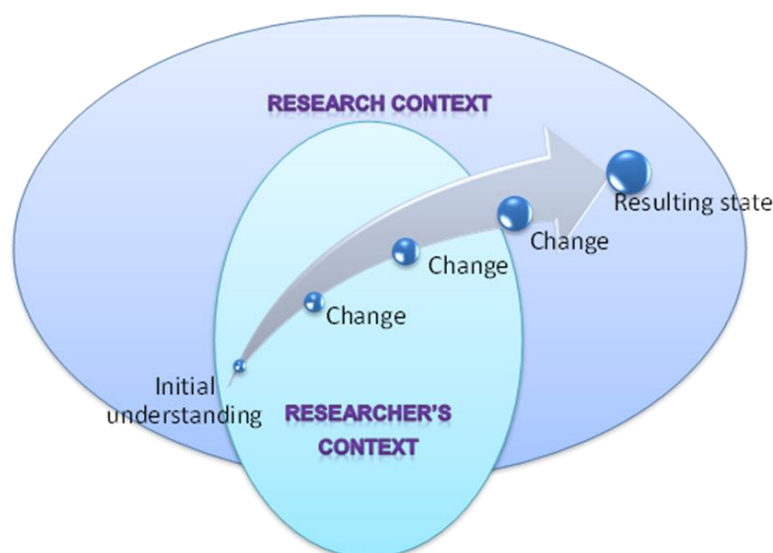


Figure 2.3: My evolving understanding of the New Zealand context.

The figure above shows the growth of my understanding. It is evolving within this research context. Since I too have a different contextual background, the evolution process has continued with my own contextual understanding. I came to New Zealand with a limited idea and started to develop my understanding of this country's unique cultural context. With my present point of view, when I look back to my initial understanding, I can see the change in it. This progression, alteration and transformation of my understanding continued throughout my research journey. In this part of my writing, I have documented my current concept about the cultural context of New Zealand and its historical background.

New Zealand is often recognised as an immigrants' country. Over many centuries, the population of this country has had diverse waves of settlement. Groups of migrants came here and settled with time. These migrations include, over time, Polynesian settlers, Europeans, people from the Pacific, East Asia, and South Asia, and so on. The descendants of these people are living here, some much longer than others. The journey of migration has provided treasured insights into the cultural values, identity and humanity of the population.

The early Eastern Polynesian group of people came in this geographic region and settled about 800 years ago (Anderson, Binney, & Harris, 2015). They developed their distinct tribal cultures with their languages/dialects, vibrant mythology, cultural presentation in

architecture, sculpture, unique visual and performing arts and the outside world recognised them as *Māori*, the aboriginal people (“Maori”, 2015) of New Zealand. Māori never was a monoculture; diversity was always a feature of the indigenous population. Ranford (2015) reports that before European contact, the people did not have any identity as Māori; they settled the shores of this land, gradually forming *Whānau*<sup>5</sup>, *Hapū*<sup>6</sup> & *Iwi*<sup>7</sup> as political structures. Each tribe and sub-tribe had their own *Tikanga*<sup>8</sup>, kinship ties and dialect. Anderson, Binney, and Harris (2015), Ballara (1979), King (2003), Phillips (2013) variously report that the contact between *tangata whenua*<sup>9</sup> and foreigners started briefly with Abel Tasman in 1642, but that the western world became aware of this place officially after Captain James Cook’s discovery and mapping of the country in 1769-70.

From the mid-eighteen century, Māori started to get visitors from different oceans and reciprocated by visiting the European world. Whalers and sealers, traders along with the missionaries, came here and became the first lot of settlers and got the identity of Pākehā. The word Pākehā does not refer only to Europeans; rather, King (1985) notes that it represents *the others* who are not Māori. Ranford (2015) also acknowledges that, although in popular culture, it refers to New Zealanders with white skin, Pākehā are the people with non-Polynesian heritage. Bentley, (1999) reports that some of the early Pākehā were also people from Asia and other parts of the world who had established themselves as traders on New Zealand soil; Māori were getting multi-ethnic guests and eventually adapting to multi-ethnic breeding.

The Treaty of Waitangi facilitated the relationship between the Crown and tribes. Contemporary New Zealand claims its official identity from the Treaty, signed between the Māori (Tangata Whenua) and the British Crown in 1840. It is considered as a very important and foundation document of New Zealand. Orange (2011) reports that debates and doubts were rooted from the birth of the Treaty and that doubts regarding effectiveness and trustworthiness of the Treaty continued to develop in the Māori population. A series of wars and conflicts took place between 1843 and 1872 between the Māori and the then crown government (Belich, 1998). A large number of lives on both sides were lost in these conflicts.

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<sup>5</sup> Extended family

<sup>6</sup> Sub tribe, is a group of several related *whānau*

<sup>7</sup> Sometimes ‘loose’ & other times ‘tight’ alliances of related hapū

<sup>8</sup> values/ tribal culture

<sup>9</sup> People of the land

After the war, most of the lands were confiscated from the Māori by the New Zealand Government.

Dissatisfaction with the inequality between the Māori and Pākehā in cultural, political and economic contexts continued for many years. The picture started to change in the latter half of the twentieth century. The protests from the indigenous group increased to bring the Treaty issues to a head. The Treaty of Waitangi Act in 1975 gave recognition of the Treaty in New Zealand law and the Waitangi Tribunal was established to process the investigation of grievances, especially the unjust loss of land. Sometimes this period is referred to as the Māori Renaissance. Webster (1998), Stafford and Williams (2006) point out that the Māori Renaissance indicated changes to power structures, and that mainstream New Zealand began to give importance to the Treaty relationship more widely.

This study specifically focuses on the context of the newly immigrated population into New Zealand. At the present time, the flow of migrations gives the impression that this country has a constantly developing population of overseas-born migrated people, immigrant children and children of immigrants who are fitting into the culture that is recognised as that of New Zealand. New migrants need to navigate their identity within a New Zealand culture, which provides an increasingly complex cultural environment, due in part to the entry of various migrant groups. Liu, McCreanor, McIntosh and Teaiwa (2005) argue that multicultural New Zealand is a young nation, and because of this country's complex cultural dynamics, the process of national identity making is also complex.

Besides the white settlers, this country was also became home to a smaller number of Asian migrants, mainly Chinese and Indians who came as labourers during the colonial period. Leckie (1995) and Ward and Masgoret (2008) reported that these Asian settlers were subject to racist regulations and inequitable processes. Leckie (1995) reported that the Immigration Restriction Act of 1899, which was the result of 'a white New Zealand policy', actively excluded 'coloured' immigrants. Beaglehole (2015) reported that in 1953, the Department of External Affairs strictly stated that they need to keep this country for European development and discouraged immigrants from Asia. The perceptions of decision makers towards immigrants have changed to more inclusive attitudes with time. The picture started to change in 1987, when immigration acts stated that immigrants will be chosen on the basis of individual merit rather than the ethnic or national origin (Greif, 1995; Phillips, 2013).

In recent years the population of New Zealand has been facing the biggest increment of all times, and it is the result of a boom in the number of recent migrants (Statistics New Zealand, 2018). This boom has multiple reasons: some migrants are voluntary because of work, study or lifestyle opportunities, and some come as a consequence of war or persecution. Now this country's door is more open for refugees, and the country has increased the quota for receiving refugees each year from 750. The quota number is currently 1000, and by 2020, it will be increased to 1500 (Galuszka, 2017). In Christchurch, the door was open to taking 120 refugees each year before the earthquakes, and after nearly a decade, with all the development in city rebuild, Christchurch is again planning to take part in the receiving the refugees (Lewis, 2018).

Leckie (1995) stated that from 1953 to the present date, six decades after legislation prohibiting discriminations on the basis of ethnicity, public attitudes towards racism are still in the process of development. Although this country is often considered as a less racist country than Australia and America, many people like Williams (2016) have criticised racial attitudes toward new migrants, especially from Asia and India. Statistics New Zealand's report (2012), based on a sample of 17,271 NZ adult (15 or above) respondents, stated, "Ten per cent of New Zealanders feel discriminated against." The following figure shows the reasons for discrimination given by respondents. Among those reasons "skin colour, race, ethnicity or nationality" scored the highest responses.

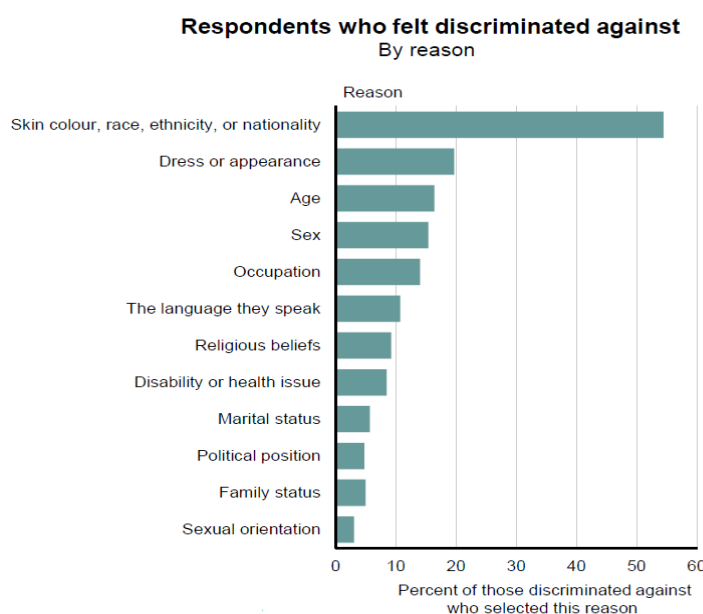


Figure 2.4: Perceived causes for discrimination. Copyright 2012 by. Statistics New Zealand  
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My study did not aim to concentrate on experiences of discrimination. However, while discussing challenges faced by the participants in my study, there was recurrently some discussion related to discrimination.

### South Asia in this research

In this research, I am using the term *South Asian* not as a cultural representative unit but as designating people from a geographic region. I am originally from one of the South Asian countries, and I am well aware of the multiplicity of cultural outlooks that are banded together as South Asian. The population of South Asian origin is rapidly increasing after the noteworthy changes of New Zealand immigration policy in 1991, and greater numbers of people came from non-traditional source countries (Statistics New Zealand, 2005; Pio, 2005). Bedford, Ho and Lidgard (2001) reported that the number of Asian immigrants, especially from China and India, grew as the result of the skill-based immigration policy. It has been variously reported that from 1986, South-Asian immigrants have increased in number more than fourteen-fold (Nisar, 2013; Bedford & Ho, 2008). Within the Christchurch context, even after the devastating earthquakes, the numbers did not go down. The following chart shows how the number of people from the five South Asian countries has increased in the year 2006 to 2013 (Statistics New Zealand, 2018).

Country of origin	Year	Area		
		Total, New Zealand by territorial authority	Canterbury Region	Christchurch City
<b>India</b>	2013	67176	2937	2466
	2006	43341	1398	1221
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	2013	9579	534	438
	2006	7257	372	330
<b>Pakistan</b>	2013	2850	150	135
	2006	2211	111	90
<b>Bangladesh</b>	2013	1476	81	66
	2006	1437	81	57
<b>Nepal</b>	2013	1410	300	213
	2006	579	87	72

Table 2.1: Increase in number of residents originally from the countries of South Asia.

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This large group of immigrants has multiple cultural and ethnic identities. For example, the leading immigrant population group, Indian, includes a range of distinct ethnic and religious

component groups. Fijian Indian and Tamil Indians have different characteristics. Panjab and Gujarat are another two areas that share the root of this group (Leckie, 1989), and they also significantly express very different cultures from each other. In fact, every subgroup of this large migrant population has a cultural expression that is significantly distinct from each other. If each of those subgroups goes through a more microscopic view, many more separate identities will be noticeable. Leckie (2007) describes that perhaps the officially traced pioneer of the Indian community, Bir Singh Gill and Phuma Sing Gill, who came here around 1890, never would have imagined today's number of faces who have established their own cultural existence. From the vivid lights of *Diwali*<sup>10</sup> to vibrant colours of *Holi*<sup>11</sup>, Indian existence is evidenced widely in this nation. Christchurch also celebrates these festivals with colossal effort, and at present, these two events are two of the most vibrant colourful and multicultural events of this city (Sharma, 2015; McKnight, 2018).

In the following discussion, I have included some description of how various academics, internationally, have written about the population groups called South Asian. I have also included some noteworthy aspect of South Asian culture. I want to mention that these aspects are not explicit definitions of the cultural elements present in the South Asian community. They are provided to give readers a glimpse through the lenses of different academics. Choudhry (2001), in a Canadian context, stated that the South Asian community is significantly diverse, containing people representing numerous socioeconomic and educational backgrounds with a range of religions and sociocultural practices. Alexander (2010) argued that study of South Asians culture in the context of Britain gets its basis from an anthropological view of culture that constructs it as a *way of life* which may be defined by traditions, rituals, beliefs, practices and institution. Through cinema, drama, music and dance performances, Bollywood movies became significantly prominent in the South Asian popular culture. However, Rajan and Lal (2007) advocated that this discourse needs to be understood through different lenses. They echoed De Certeau's (1984) idea whereby "popular culture is not merely spectacle or media generated representation, but rather the simple and routine performance of *everyday activities*... it releases the pressure from wanting to read Bollywood as the primary model of South Asian cultural representation" (p.5)

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<sup>10</sup> The festival of lights. Predominantly Hindu religion festive celebration. This festival has different names and different ways of celebration in different countries of South Asia such as Deepavali, Kali puja, Tihar.

<sup>11</sup> The festival of colours.

Despite migration, some enduring core beliefs and actions of South Asian culture have been identified, for instance, the relationship between men and women and attitudes to dating and marriage. Stuart and Ward (2011) argued that while South Asian migrants in New Zealand have the expertise for embracing the wider society by active engagement and participation, they also demonstrate firm intention to preserve their traditional culture and identity. Stuart and Ward (2009) stated in relation to South Asian immigrants' attitude to the *man-woman* relationship, "Beliefs regarding dating practices can be one of the most significant points of contrast between the ethnic and host culture's norms. In a number of non-Western cultures, marriage is the first point of intimacy with a member of the opposite sex. The practice of dating is not only foreign but also threatening, as it undermines religious and moral values" (p. 27). Kwak and Berry (2001) have noted, in their Canadian study, that immigrants from South Asia reveal the highest desire for cultural preservation after migration. They also found that their expectation is for traditionalism concerning marriage and family life. DeSouza (2010) reported similar findings for the New Zealand context and stated that for most South Asian migrants, marriage is an eternal bond and is recognised as more than a contract or an institution. She also pointed that in marriage women are expected to produce children as early as possible, and ideally to give birth of a male child who will continue the family blood and ensure keeping the family wealth in the family. Merali (2015) argued that arranged marriage is a significantly common custom in South Asian culture, in which parents, along with elderly relatives, makes the decision in finding suitable partners for the children. She acknowledged that, historically, the formal or informal exchange of money or dowry is present in the custom of arranged marriage, whereby the family of the male gains in the money exchange. Thus preference for male children and gender inequity have become part of South Asian cultural customs (Merail, 2015; DeSouza, 2010).

Food has been acknowledged as central to the cultural and religious practices of many ethnic communities. Festivals and foods receive considerable attention in expressing the cultural identity of South Asian migrants, and Johnson (2015) noted that the increasing number of Asian festivals are playing an important role in contributing to contemporary New Zealand cultural diversity. Nayar's (2015) findings showed that South Asians culturally acknowledge themselves as a more hospitable community and the participants in her study find more affinity with the Māori and Pasifika in terms of hospitality, rather than with Pākehā. Nayar also described the experience of a South Asian immigrant mother in terms of adaptation to food. She noted the contrast between her native food and so-called western foods and

reported the challenge the mother faced while acculturating her child with the new food, including decision to feed her child the non-vegetarian foods that are strictly prohibited in her culture. The mother wanted to habituate her child to both vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods, as otherwise, her child would face a similar struggle in finding appropriate food outside home as that which the parents faced.

Religion plays a vital role in concentrating the cultural identity of South Asian migrants and Alexander (2010) has identified that religion and culture become synonymous to some extent for many members of such communities. She noted that while there are real and significant religious differences between South Asian groups, religion, of whichever form, mostly ranks as the first concern in their descriptions of identity.

Seymour (as cited in Paiva, 2008) noted factors of South Asian culture in relation to childrearing that were different from western practices. She stated that parents often show spontaneous physical affection to their children, that they breastfeed for at least two years or more, and that children do not sleep alone throughout their childhood and sometimes into their adolescence. She also stated that teasing, scolding, threatening to give physical punishment were commonly observed practices in disciplining children. Paiva (2008) found similar practices in her study based in London, United Kingdom. She noted that, traditionally, South Asian parents consider young children's behaviour as instinctual, and they consider direct instruction is the most appropriate strategy for teaching children.

### **My Positionality within the research context**

Being an immigrant parent in a developed country is an enigmatic challenging identity. There are numerous parents who are immigrating temporarily for the purpose of higher education, scholarly enrichment and career development abroad. I am one of them. I am originally from Bangladesh, a developing country of South Asia. My son was a toddler while I started my PhD journey in 2014. As an international student in New Zealand, I have observed him growing up having a global identity; his childhood is so much different than my one! From school friends' names to their games, everything is different. I feel amazed to see how interesting his school classes are and how much he is learning by playing without having the burden of exams. As an immigrant parent, I feel excited to see his progress. I am excited to be able to afford him with the facilities he is getting in this developed country compared to

Bangladesh. However, I also feel he is missing things that were a big part of my childhood, the kind of childhood that teaches us to be Bangladeshi. He is missing the festivals, and many of our food those are unavailable here. He is missing the mud of my village, the warm touch of his grandparents, and the care of the extended family.

My Bangladeshi personality wishes to nurture him in the traditional way. However, I will never expect him to be restricted by only living within my native culture and be socially isolated while living abroad. The stories I am telling in my thesis have had considerable influence on my personal life, I have learnt and applied many things from these parents, from their experiences. Their experiences helped me to make many decisions in my parenting, helped me to choose what to hold on to and what reject. Their voices directed me to read more and find a way to be an effective support for my little son, who is studying in a primary school in Christchurch. Baisakhi taught me to make an effort to celebrate the festivals and teach language. Ashari guided me to be a friend as well as a protector. From Kartik, I have learnt to be a learner. Ashshin taught me how to teach my son to announce proudly that he is Bangladeshi. Zuleikha gave me an idea of how to teach him what to eat and what not to eat. Poush inspired me to bring the local culture in front of my child and to be religious without wrapping him with all the rules. Therefore, this thesis journey has not only supported my academic development to grow, but it also influenced my personal life too.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### Focus and purpose of this study

As discussed in Chapter One, this study investigates how immigrant parents teach culture to their children in Christchurch New Zealand. As detailed in Chapter Two, this issue is important because of the increasing number of immigrants in New Zealand society. Continuously growing numbers in the migrant community create the need for school authorities, teachers, curriculum planners and the wider community to deal with cultural diversity. Because of the inclusion of immigrant students in the mainstream education system, the involvement of parents in their children's education requires attention. To enable more effective parental involvement, knowing about migrants' processes of cultural transmission is important. However, there is limited research that has focused on South Asian parents in Christchurch. The current study sets out to fill this gap and begin a dialogue about the perspectives of such immigrant parents. Therefore this research investigates participants' understandings of what they want to teach their children about culture, and so it seeks details of what they see is important. This has led to a qualitative approach and the use of narratives. This chapter explains the reason for utilising an overarching qualitative research paradigm, using case studies in a broadly ethnographic approach. It further explains methods for gathering information, the process of analysing them and the decisions about how to report the findings.

The overarching research question of this thesis is:

How do immigrant parents navigate and pass on culture to their children?

And the sub-questions are:

1. What aspects of their native culture do participants want to transmit and sustain in their children, and why?
2. What aspects of their native culture do they want to let go of and help their children to bypass, and why?
3. How do they carry out the teaching of their native culture?
4. What structures and resources support them? What support sources would they like to have?

5. What problems arrive? What successes occur?
6. How do participants perceive multiculturalism within the context of Christchurch and wider New Zealand settings?
7. What do participants understand the Treaty of Waitangi and how do they prepare their children to understand this?
8. What support structures and resources do they have to help this teaching process?
9. How do they perceive the impact of schooling on helping their children
  - a. retain their culture of origin
  - b. fit into New Zealand culture after migration and find their identity

## **Research Paradigm**

### ***Qualitative research***

A qualitative approach allows me to investigate the rich detail of the participants' experiences and perspectives. It also permits me to analyse and interpret their accounts of their experience and thinking. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explained that qualitative research provides rich descriptions produced from experiences, perspectives and stories, which are temporarily situated and contextual. Research design and researcher's own understanding can influence both what data is acquired and how it is interpreted. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) also highlight that qualitative research is "... an interpretive naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p.3). In this study, in the first instance, the participants interpret their own experiences. Then reflective analysis further explores implications and meanings.

### ***Case study***

This research is a study of six cases where each case consists of the experiences, perceptions and attitudes of a parent of South Asian origin. The cases portray how those parents navigate between cultures and how they transfer cultural understandings and attitudes to their children. Although six individual cases have been studied, this research constitutes an implicit

overarching case: that of immigrant parents in Christchurch. I have chosen a case study approach because a case study allows detailed exploration of experience within a bounded context (Stake, 2005; Creswell, 2013). In case study research defining and explicating the boundaries is very important. In this study, the cases are specifically bounded in terms of time, place and other influential circumstances; outside these boundaries, other cases may not show similar findings.

Firstly the cases in this study have a definite boundary of time in which they were studied. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that “a case is a snapshot of reality, a slice of life or an episode” (p.214). Although this study has taken place over a relatively long period of two years, it is still a snapshot or slice of life because there can be no assumption that participants will have similar views in the months and years after the project finished. Secondly, *place*, as discussed in Chapter Two, is important because the cases are bounded in geographical and contextual places. Within the time and place, there are other elements that I describe later in this chapter that influenced the case study although I did not deliberately select my cases depending on them.

As a researcher, I have given careful attention to the particular as Goethe (as cited in Eisner, 2017) stated, “The particular is always more than a match for the universal; the universal always has to accommodate itself to the particular”. This case study research contributes a descriptive investigation of the thoughts and contexts of particular individuals in their particular setting. Martens (2010) stated, “Case studies focus on a particular instance (object or case) and reaching an understanding within a complex context” (p.233). This research has no intention to make generalised assertions but rather to provoke questions and suggest possibilities to readers who are dealing with similar issues. The purpose of this investigation is to help readers, especially teachers, to understand migrants’ families better. It may increase the possibilities for them to better engage with immigrant families.

### ***Ethnographic approach***

These case studies have followed a broadly ethnographic approach. They involve in-depth description of how the parents report their perceptions, attitudes, frustrations, expectations and understandings related to the processes of culture navigation. Such detail aligns with how Geertz (1973, 1983), Greenblatt (1997) described the thick description involved in ethnography.



This study involves a description of the concept of *cultural place*: how participants are evolving in their cultural place and how they are supporting their children to grow in it. In Chapter Two cultural place is discussed in detail. As noted in Chapter Four, literature has reported that cultural place is an essential aspect in studying child development. Ethnography allows the description of parents' cultural places. Weisner (1996) acknowledged that ethnography introduces the cultural place into the study of understanding human development. He argued, "An important goal of ethnographic research is to describe and understand the cultural place and its influence on the everyday lives of its members" (p. 307).

### ***Narratives, and the use of dramatic and graphic elements***

Arising from the commitment to truthfully report parents' stories of their personal experiences, I have chosen to construct narratives as part of the means to present data. Narratives allow me to tell the stories in a way that goes beyond overt objectivity. I then create monologues that seek to capture personality as well as facts. Each dramatic monologue could thus be seen as an artwork. I have written in detail about the process later in this chapter. I have chosen to write narratives as Clandinin and Connelly (2004) argued that narratives investigate human experiences as the respondents have lived them in person, in a particular time, place, and relationship. They stated, "...education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories...people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (p. 2). As noted by Esin, Fathi and Squire (2014), narrative allows a researcher to stay committed to the idea that the respondents interpret their own experiences. Pascoe and Wright (2018) discussed the challenges of authentic representation of experience in research and advocated the use of the graphic novel format to address those challenges. They argued that in research, for the most part, researchers represents filtered experience which may lack the richness of real-life experience and so researchers are faced with challenges to select effective ways of representing experience authentically. They have suggested that the graphic novel, which is a way of narrating with visual content that tells the story intensely, can be useful for researchers to give justice to the voice, context and action of the real experience. While I do not attempt to construct a graphic novel, I do offer painted images of the participants to give further life to their narratives.

To understand how different researchers have applied a narrative approach in their studies, I have read a range of research reports. Alam (2016), Amin (2017), and Salahuddin (2016) used narrative in the presentations of their studies in a Bangladeshi education context. Alam (2016) reported in his participatory action research the possibility of change in existing teaching practise and used teachers' and his own dialogues to build narratives of change. Amin (2017) in his case study of the current situation of English language teaching reported participants' stories to capture individual perceptions and so move beyond the anonymous veneer of numbers. Salahuddin (2016) utilised a series of professional dialogues to tell the story of a secondary school with creative leadership practice. Greenwood and Hasnat (2018) developed a drama with stick puppets to capture the human aspect of problems in rural education. Nayar (2015) offered stories of Indian migrant women in New Zealand while navigating their cultural space within the occupational sector. Martis's (2016) ethnographic research provided narratives of Indian male migrants about their settlement experience in New Zealand. Salpitikoralala (2015) reported narratives of four non-Māori ethnic minority psychotherapist to explore their perception experience of living and practicing in New Zealand. All these narratives offered me a range of ways of how narratives can be used in research with variations acceding to intention, methodology, context, and area of investigation and personal style. They helped me to find my style of writing the narratives in this thesis. I further discussed this later in this chapter.

### **Method of collecting information**

The method of collecting empirical material in this research has been through in-depth interviews over a period of time. Interview has been variously acknowledged as one of the significant ways of collecting qualitative data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) explained that interviews can utilise open-ended questions and probes, and so yield in-depth information about the interviewee's experience, perception, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. He also emphasised that the received data from the interviewee should consist of verbatim quotations with sufficient interpretable context. The reason behind choosing interviews as the method of collecting information is that it creates the opportunity for dialogues. Interviews opened the floor for me and the participants to discuss issues.

I began with semi-structured interviews that gradually evolved to open-ended ones. I have used interviews with open ended question because I wanted to offer some broad guidance to the interviewees about what I am looking at with room for improvisation. Zhang and Wildemuth, (2009) reported, “The unstructured interview technique was developed in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology as a method to elicit people’s social realities. ... the term is used interchangeably with the terms, informal conversational interview, in-depth interview, nonstandardized interview, and ethnographic interview” (p. 1) .

My goal has been to understand each parent’s process of teaching culture. Therefore the topics of the interviews were broadly organised into three sections. The first section concentrated on the cultural place of their native context. Within the first section, I collected information about the aspects of the culture of origin that parents were willingly transmitting and wanted to sustain in their children. I asked how they are doing it, why it is so important, what the challenges are, whether they are becoming successful or not, and if not then why not. I also collected information about whether they have some aspects in their native culture, that they would like to avoid in their new country, asking why they wanted to bypass those aspects and how they were doing that.

In the second section, I have looked for their experiences and perceptions related to the context of Christchurch, the cultural place of their migration. I searched for information related to how they see multiculturalism and what they know about the Treaty of Waitangi within the Christchurch context and in broader New Zealand perspective. I also prompted discussion about the extent to which they understood the Treaty of Waitangi as a founding document of New Zealand and how they were adapting themselves and supporting their children to fit into the culture of New Zealand. The reason I looked for information is that concepts of multiculturalism and understandings of the Treaty are important for New Zealand’s socio-cultural identity.

In the third section I have explored the support resources they have for their children and those they wish to get. I gained knowledge about their actual and expected support resources in terms of both their own cultural places and the extended community and the school. The parents shared many of their satisfactions as well as frustrations relating to sources of support and gave me important suggestions which enriched my understandings and prompted suggestions I make in the concluding chapter. The topics of interview questions are attached as an appendix.

I constructed those topics into questions those guided me to develop a two-way conversation for eliciting the participant's experience. I have applied open-ended questions because I allowed myself to flow into a more intuitive and natural conversation in the follow-up discussions. The questions mainly helped me to present topics for discussion. The interviews began with topic directed questions then other questions emerged through what arose in the interviews, varying from person to person. I continued to talk and probe the participants until I felt I had saturated the topic, For example, the following discussion flowed while talking about Ashshin's perception about multiculturalism in her place of migration.

Ashshin: Mini was born here. I believe she is Kiwi by birth. She is the citizen of New Zealand. But people often ask her, 'Where are you from?' when they first meet Mini!

Tisi: How do you see these sort of questions?

Ashshin: Um... Let me think a bit... (Paused) I think asking these kinds of questions are normal. Since New Zealand is still in its growing stage in terms of multiculturalism, getting these questions are very usual for an immigrant.

Tisi: Hum... So how you usually deal with these questions?

Ashshin: For Mini she often would say, 'I was born here. I am a Kiwi.' Then they would ask again 'where your parents from?' So it is our root that would be always linked with my child and she can never leave these questions behind. Her face is carrying her parents' immigrant identity. So it is best for her to know about her root and it is good to understand the origin for everyone.

Tisi: Okay...and for you?

Ashshin: Here people often do not see many faces like us. They get confused when they see us. They start comparing our faces with the ethnicity they know and start thinking, "is she Indian? Is she Malaysian or Indonesian?" This is quite not common for me that they guessed my country right. So, this is why it is quite normal for people to ask about our country of origin. I can understand. I do not feel awkward to answer the same question over and over again. I am neither offended nor ashamed to answer 'Where am I from?' Why should I feel bad about it? Deep inside, being Nepali is my pride.

Sometimes I gave prompts, and the interviews flowed into a very big discussion. Some of those sessions produced two to three hours of recording. The first interviews with each participant have been the longest as I tried to address all the topics in those sessions to give them an idea about my research outline and many of the topics needed considerable explanation. Follow-up interviews were not like the first one, and mostly we discussed some aspect of the topics to have an in-depth elaborative conversation. For instance, with Ashari we had one whole session only discussing her religious practice.

All the sessions were arranged in an informal environment; most of them were done either at their homes or at mine. We also had some of the sessions at a local coffee shop, at the park, at community functions and two of the interviews were taken at the post-graduate student common room of my university. We also communicated through video conferencing, over the telephone, through social media and email. After each communication, I have included a report in both of my field and reflective journals. Within the interviews, some participants offered me photos, videos, and journals that they had archived, and we discussed those materials.

I have been in touch with the participants for a relatively long period, from 2015 to 2018, so the process could be described as a longitudinal study. I went back to the parents repeatedly with the same cluster of topics to discuss over a period of time. However, I did not intend to report changes over this time nor is this thesis a description of all the discussions I had with the six parents. Even though I have collected the information over a period of time, each narrative represents a snapshot of time. There is no guarantee that the parents would feel, think and respond in the same way now. Their words that I have used are real and authentic for that particular time.

Building a good rapport with the parents has been an essential part of this study and interaction with them over a more extended period offered me the opportunity to develop personal relationships with them. To get an in-depth picture in a case study, a good connection with the participants is essential. It has been variously argued that personal engagement may raise questions about the researcher's neutrality (Oakley, 1981; Thomson and Holland, 2003). Nevertheless, many researchers (Lather, 1992; Patton, 2002; Baxter and Jack, 2008; Yin, 2014) see this development of relationships as an advantage of this approach. I place myself with the latter group. I understand from the writing of Baxter and Jack, (2008) that the personal engagements enable participants to express their stories and

explain their reality from their point of view. In my case, it offered the opportunity of a warm collaboration between me and the participants. In accordance with Patton's advice (2015), I have established rapport non-judgementally, concentrating on not undermining my acceptance of each participant's voice. I sought to show respectful care to the information the person was sharing.

I conducted all the interviews in English. After each interview, I immediately did verbatim transcription of the recording, word for word. It had my questions and the parent's answer with all the ums, pauses, repetitions, mumbling and corrections. Then I transformed them into a detailed narrative following the same progression but taking out the hesitations, irrelevancies and my words. After that I returned the narrative to each participant to read. I did not use any software for transcription because I felt it may lose the original essence of the sessions. My respondents are immigrants and they have a distinct accent of speaking. Because of my first-hand experience with them, I felt privileged to understand and write their speech correctly.

I recorded the interviews with my audio recorder. I have taken field notes to write some comments during the interviews. In my field notes I mainly focused on capturing the respondents' expressions which I was not getting through the audio records. For instance, while recalling their experiences, the parents would pause and take some time to tell the story and while telling the story they would smile, laugh, frown, give a wink and even sometimes they had tears in their eyes. In some discussions, they would express their opinion frantically, sometimes they expressed disgust while sharing some painful memory. They also expressed happiness and hope with cheerful laughter. I took notes of the expressions and body languages that had significant value for narrating their stories.

Since most of the interviews were taken in an informal set-up, we had many breaks during the discussions. I also included the break times, topics of discussion and the reasons for taking the break in my field notes. I kept a description of the appearance of the interviewees which helped me later while making their character paintings. I explain the paintings later in this chapter. Eisenhardt (1989) acknowledged that it is often challenging for the qualitative researcher to know beforehand what will and will not be worthwhile in the future. So my field note book was used for collecting as much detail as possible of our discussions rather than guessing in advance about the usefulness of those details.

From the very first day of communication with my participants, I have written my reflections in a journal. Those memos represents conceptualisations about the contexts of the interviewees as well as my own experience and positionality within the research setting. Lempert (2007) acknowledged that memos are “the narrated records of a theorist’s analytical conversations with him/herself about the research data” (p.247). When I look back to the first pages of my reflective journals, I can see the gap in my awareness and how much I have evolved through the research.

The first entries were more general and lacked detailed connections. However they surely helped me to set the base for later detailing and making connection with other information. Lempert (2007) also acknowledged, “Memos, especially the early ones, are speculative and may lack coherence and connection to one another. They record interpretations and incipient patterns emerging from the concrete realities of the social worlds of research sites” (p.247). I have found those reflections are significant for my study, and I can see myself as a researcher who is growing in terms of understanding the participants’ perspectives. All of these activities are centrally related to the interviews. And my reflective journal began the analysis of the collected information.

## **Participants**

The participants of this study are first generation immigrant parents in Christchurch, New Zealand who arrived here from five different countries of South Asian region. Since my intention was not to generalise but to acquire insights from each individual’s process, I purposefully selected the participants. Patton (2002) stated, “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations.” (p. 230). Therefore the individuals in my study were picked because I considered they would be “information rich”.

While selecting the participants, I purposefully looked for some characteristics and some others emerged after selection. The primary selection characteristics were directly connected to my research query. Because I wanted participants from a range of South Asian of countries and I needed to find people whom I could approach and who were willing to talk to me over

two years. I purposefully selected parents variously from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan. I have more discussion on the process of selecting the participants later in this section. For the need of my investigation purpose, I intentionally tried to find participants who are first generation immigrants from South Asian origin. The rational of selecting such group is further discussed later in this chapter where I explain my positionality. The participants needed to be parents whose children are students in various levels of New Zealand education institutes. I intentionally chose those who had at least two years of experience in dealing with their children's education providers. I assumed newer arrivals might not have much to share related to the second and third sections of my interview questions. The parents might or might not be actively involved with their children's educational activities, but with a minimum period of time, they had the opportunity to observe and make a comment on various issues.

After selection, I found a number of other common characteristics. The parents mostly belonged to families of lower middle to upper middle socioeconomic status in Christchurch, who had immigrated and brought their families to New Zealand not more than two decades ago. They may or may not actively be involved with their native community in Christchurch, but all of them shared a distinct point of view about the relevant community. Some of them share a similarity in celebrating their festivals. Most of the participants' country of origin share a similar British colonial history (O'Hanlon, 1988; Hussain, 1997).

I give the list of my research participants in the following table.

Number		Pseudonym	Age	Number of year in New Zealand	Number of children	Work	Country of Origin	Gender
Case	Chapter							
1	Five	Baisakhi Narayanasyami	35	11	2	Full time	India	Female
2	Six	Ashari Fernando	56	16	3	Full time	Sri Lanka	Female
3	Seven	Ashshin Rai	34	10	1	Full time	Nepal	Female
4	Eight	Zuleikha Hassin	37	5	3	Student	Pakistan	Female
5	Nine	Poush Aman	48	19	1	Full time	Bangladesh	Female
6	Ten	Oporajito Kartik	27	4	1	Full time	Bangladesh	Male

Table 3.1: Participants



The journey of selecting and keeping the participants' interest in this research was stressful because the study needed interaction with the parents for a long time during which they would face many changes in their life. On the first four months of my research journey, I set out to socialise with various communities to find eligible participants for my study. I used my personal connections, and my colleagues from my learning community helped me to communicate with different parents. Initially, I approached thirty-five people; twelve parents reported back to me. Later on, after discussing my research intention in detail with them, I lost two of them as they were not ready to commit for a more extended period of time. I started the research with the ten participants.

After conducting the first interview, one parent lost interest. He felt uncomfortable about the idea of documenting all the details of his parenting story. Although he still lives in the same city, at that period of time he was planning to move to another city. Hence, he expressed that it would be inappropriate to share his personal experiences and stopped participating.

Another participant was very supportive in her first few sessions. Unfortunately, in the time between 2016 and 2017, she was dealing with family violence and protection issues in her family. In the middle of my study, she went through a divorce, and her son was diagnosed with ADHD. Eventually, she also felt uncomfortable to share her tangled life stories and particularly those affected her son's learning process. She left the research after one and a half years. After conducting several sessions with another participant, I found I was getting very little material relevant to my research. Therefore, I have not included her case.

I lost three participants in the middle of the journey and continued with seven cases. The most crucial factor in choosing a participant was a longer-term commitment; I needed their willingness to participate for so long. Moreover, to get in-depth information, they needed to talk to me relatively freely; as spontaneously as people would in normal conversation. Thus three did not offer the in-depth information I was seeking. Two of them dropped out and I withdrew one. In the final presentation of my thesis, I did not write about one further case because of the overpowering similarity between two of the cases. During the writing phase of my project, I have found that the stories captured in two of the cases showed many similarities. They were from the same country of origin, they had much the same attitude towards schooling, and they shared relatively overlapping stories. To avoid presenting nearly repetitive narratives, I choose the fuller story of the two. Other studies also narrowed the

number of narratives because of a need for more effective presentation. For example, Tran (2014) in his thesis chose to present narratives of three from his 13 parents. He was looking at the minority group parents' attitude to their children learning their indigenous language in Vietnam. Tran developed three categories from his interviewees. First, he took interviewees who expressed their strong desire to keep the indigenous language. At the other end, he put those who did not find it was necessary to practice the indigenous language. The third category was the ones who had mixed feelings. So he created three narratives instead of the thirteen that represents three categories. Each of the narratives represents the information gained from different individuals. In my thesis, I could also do that if I would interview, for instance, thirty people. Then I no doubt would have found even more different stories but also more convergences. Also, I would have picked ones that are radically different. It may or may not have extended the number of the presented narratives in that case. It was an arbitrary and accidental that I have got six. There is no reason why I could not have got seven. However, there was no point to report two cases that have minimal differences. Because I wanted to give richer stories rather than a lot of stories, I decided to select these six cases.

I am grateful to the story owners because they supported me hugely throughout the journey, had faith in me and gave their highest input to my study. As I mentioned earlier, I returned the transcriptions of the audio records to them regularly and they gave their acknowledgements of the information they have given, replied with feedback on the transcriptions, clarified and changed some of the places. The following two images are screenshots of two small portions of the edits I got from Baisakhi, where she is correcting me in relation to her process of native language teaching. The third image is the edit I received from Poush, where she is explaining her expectation on Muntasir's Bangla language acquisition skill. I utilised their feedback in developing my final narratives.

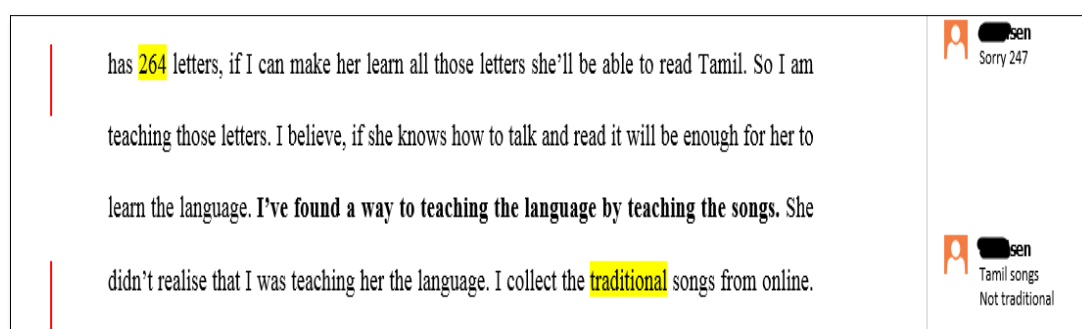


Image 3.1: Baisakhi's edits

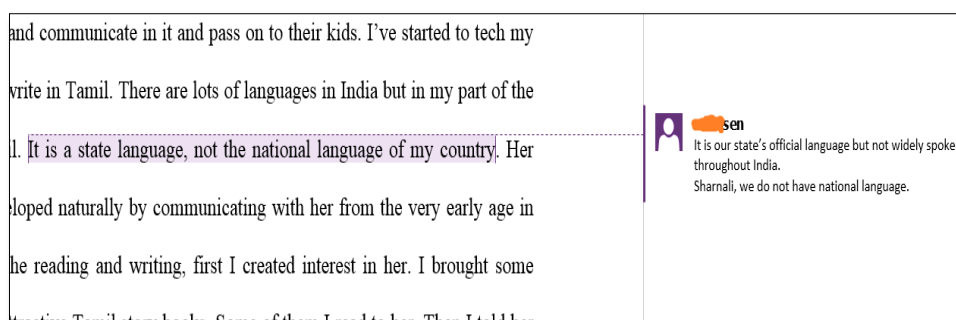


Image 3.2: Baisakhi's edits

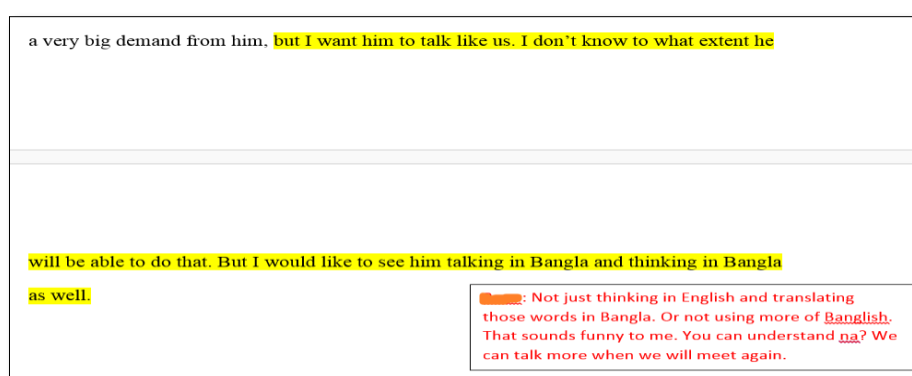


Image 3.3: Poush's feedback

### My positionality and its impact on my analysis

When I came to New Zealand, my idea about this country was just like a common picture of a developed country that we would find in the books and movies. To be specific, I imagined this country would be similar to the place that I saw in the famous 1965 movie, “The Sound of Music”. To some extent, I still see the similarity when I see the natural beauty of snowy hills and mountains and I start humming “the hills are alive with the sound of music...” I had a very superficial idea about the people of this country, the Treaty relationship and, most importantly, about how to fit into the country’s multi-ethnic social circumstances. I can recall clearly how vaguely I understood anything about the indigenous culture and their historical ownership of this land. With time the complexity of the context started to unfold and I gradually started understanding the social, political and cultural context of Christchurch.

My background led me to select immigrants from the South Asian region. I belong to one of the South Asian countries. I had acquired an initial conception of the cultural profiles of these

countries from my secondary school education. Being a Bangladeshi immigrant parent helped me to explore two of the cases from a “native’s point of view” (Jones, 2006).

I have a similar contextual background to that of my participants and so the topic of this research actively impacts on me as well. To some extent, I have brought an insider’s perspective to the study as a whole, although I was an outsider to each of the parent’s contexts. On the one hand, my positionality allows me to have some insights because I have shared some similar experiences. For instance, as Muslim, I understood some of the preciousness of the religion, and as I share a similar history of British colonialism, I understood the complexity related participants’ national histories. My own experience as an immigrant helps me to understand why they may or may not wish to live in a ghetto or be too involved with the community. In addition, the similarities to my own background help me to understand the accent, intonation and non-native English phrases commonly used by this immigrant community. Although all the information has been collected in English, my communicative language proficiency in three of the languages (Bangla, Hindi and Urdu) other than English, helped me to understand the accent, body language and helped me to bring warmth to the relationship with my participants. A simple use of ‘Assalamu Alaikum’ for greeting three of my Muslim participants helped me to establish open communication with them. It is common for many from this community to use the phrase *cow meat* instead of *beef* and also using *pig meat* instead of *pork*, *bacon* or *ham*. I am habituated to hear a *Naa* after every sentence while explaining something. I know that the repetitive use of the words *actually/basically/really/truly/so* is actually helping them to find the right English word for an explanation. I understand that most of them would prefer being addressed by *Apa / Bhabhi / Didi*, which literally means sister, rather than by only their name. For Kartik, I used *Bhai*, brother, as in Bangladesh it is commonly used after the name for addressing a man.

On the other hand, familiarity could lead me to presume that I understand, when I did not. Because I had similar experiences, sometimes I thought I knew what participants meant, but actually I did not. Familiarity does two things: one, it helps us to understand, but the other thing is that sometimes it makes us blind to the differences. So on one hand, our similarities were helping me to understand but on the other hand, I was aware that it might make me presume wrongly. I could not totally stop myself from making some blurring, but I did take steps to reduce it. For example, throughout my data collection period, whenever I took any interview, I did the transcription immediately. When I read the transcription repeatedly, the confusing statements would come out: sometimes I felt that I was over-thinking or sometimes

I felt I understood incorrectly. So I opened a discussion of those topics again with the participants in our follow-up sessions. Even after doing all this I still found some of the blurry areas, and I sent them back to the participants to check. Luckily they were incredibly supportive and, as in the above examples of Baisakhi and Poush, sometimes they identified my misunderstandings and send back their corrections.

I want to give another example of how I sought feedback as a means to delve deeper into participants' stories. At the final period of my writing, when I was already written my stories, one of my critical friends stated, "Be careful about defining Zuleikha's ethnicity as Punjabi-Pakistani, she probably has an ancestral root to the Punjab region which now belongs to India. And you would need to include her history of being a refugee to the neo-nation Pakistan to explain her context to the readers." I took his comment very seriously and went back to cross-check with Zuleikha. She confirmed that her ancestors had lived in the same place for generations and they had no history of being refugees.

## **Analysis**

Analysis of the material I gathered from participants was an on-going process. There were no separate stages of time in my research journey for collecting data and for analysing. I did them simultaneously. The hours of working after interviews pushed me to probe deeply and search for missing information. This overlapping process of collection and analysis allowed me to find information gaps after every session and to make adjustments during the next interview session.

A critical friend challenged me about my analysis process and wished to see the "systematic coding of the data" and theorising with the support of other sources. Because I was dealing with complex experiential understandings and perceptive, I did not find direct coding a good option for analysis. Rather I used thematic analysis. Ideas and concepts of other academics have offered echoes to what I have found in my analysis but although I report alignments with aspects of their work in discussion of each narrative I did not use any of their theories as the basis for interpretation and analysis. Instead, I have worked from a grounded approach, working with themes that arose from what the participants said. In following sections I detail my processes of analysis.

### *Using my field journal*

My field notes were written in brief notes mostly in Bangla. In order to retain their meaning I would rewrite them more fully after returning home and include them as side notes in my interview transcriptions. The following image is a screenshot of one side note. I had made a field note in my diary about the appearance of Baisakhi after our first interview at her home. I had noted that what she wore was noticeably different from the previous meetings outside her home, and I considered her clothes reflected her comfort with her culture of origin.

**Tisi:** We were talking about how you see the cultural differences between Tamil Nadu and Christchurch.

Baisakhi: Here in kiwi culture, they do not bother much with these values. They have a very different culture. I am not saying which is good or bad but different. There is a very big list of difference in the values and I want my children should know our values. I am not very strict

#### **Shamali Tisi**

Follow up discussion from our last interview about Cultural differences. Today we met at Baisakhi's home. From her sitting area, I could see traditional brass utensils stacked beside the dish washing basin in her open plan kitchen. They had lunch just before I came. As it is a weekend, she was more relaxed and was wearing what she do not usually wear outside. Today, she was wearing a casual salwar-kameez, gold earrings, gold bangles and a chain, small red Vermilion bindi was on her forehead.

Image 4: the field notes as a side note to transcription.

### *Searching for the themes; using writing as a tool*

After getting feedback on the detailed narratives that I sent to my participants after each interview sessions, I started to read them repeatedly to identify the important themes and rearrange them accordingly. From my standpoint at the end of this project, I see those initial narratives as the first phase of narrating my cases: those early narratives had all of the input from the interview transcription, field notes and reflective memos. As stated above, I was able to continuously collect information from my participants, especially when any gaps or contractions seemed to appear. This allowed me to be flexible in evolving themes. I want to mention again that moving backwards and forward was a very important part of the analysis process and I did not draw inelastic borders between information collection and analysis. After two years of continuing this process, I started to compile the current series of narratives for each case.

I carefully selected the themes emerged from each narrative. I was dealing with a huge amount of significant information and those themes were working like the navigating stars for sailing the ship in a sea. After teasing out the key themes from each story they started to become more meaningful and I began to understand how they could contribute new knowledge. I have used writing as a tool for thinking about the stories. As the complexity of my study is practically related to understanding human practise, I had to write about it many

times to figure it out. I rewrote each chapter again and again, each five or more times. I see this rewriting as a powerful tool for making meaning.

### *Support sources through working in a learning community*

I am a part of the Research Lab for Creativity and Change at the University of Canterbury. Our research lab operates as a doctoral learning community (Greenwood, 2018). My learning community has been one of the greatest supports throughout my research journey. My colleagues encouraged me to practice interviewing before jumping into the actual research field. I took their suggestions seriously and I did a pilot study and gave a presentation regarding my experience in front of my supervisors and colleagues. It was more than three years ago and a completely new experience for me to interview a person outside my native country. That experience supported me effectively to reshape the topics for interview, to develop my understanding about the procedure, and my confidence became greater.

In addition, sharing my ideas and the continuous development of drafts with my colleagues in the lab seminars allowed me to consider my project through the multiple lenses of readers and listeners outside my immediate environment. The *hot-seat* presentations of our lab prompted me to think on my feet and to consider my findings critically. My colleagues would challenge me with their critical questions. Sometimes, I have consciously edited my work after getting their suggestions and at other times I have defended my interpretations. Their input helped me to write the chapters in more clear and expressive language.

Presenting my papers in international conferences enriched my research with the comments and suggestions of a wider academic learning community. One of those presentations was particularly instrumental in helping select my way of presenting the stories in my thesis. I was still working the best way to share my findings; I was not yet fully convinced about my structure at that time. I felt that I was not doing justice to the experiential voices of the parents. The narratives had the richness of the participants' stories, but they lacked the life of real stories from real people.

I was beginning to experiment with the possibility of dramatic monologues. I prepared one performed it at the IDIERI<sup>12</sup> Drama conference. After writing the monologue, I rigorously practiced the script and gradually my novice skill of acting in English grew. At the conference it received a good response from the academics who are actively working in the

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<sup>12</sup> International Drama in Education Research Institute

field of drama and education. After the conference, I decided to rewrite the stories again; now the target was to present them in the forms of dramatic monologues. Acting in front of many specialists of drama and education helped me to realise again how important it was to share what the participants had to say and to find a way to do so.

### ***Character photography and painting***

While constructing the characters for my monologues, I explored ways of giving a visual impression of the participants, since I could not perform the monologues within the printed text of my thesis. I wanted to preserve the anonymity of my participants as well as providing an image of them that would capture the flavour of their personality and culture. First I thought about using six models to pose as the characters and photographing them. I then dismissed the idea because it would be too specific at the same time as not real. Then I decided to take each role myself, and take photographs of myself in costume to represent each character. I had a friend, a professional painter, who was willing to paint them for me. He did not know the participants. He would have my photographs and a small description of the character which would help him to differentiate the characters from the images of me. After sending the materials to my friend, Sarker, we had several chats about how the character would look like, made several changes in the sketch and in coloured paintings, and finally achieved the current images. Then I send them back to the participants to have their comments. All of them were happy with the paintings and gave their consent for use of the paintings to represent them. I have presented the representative character paintings at the beginning of each chapter. Although I could not present the thesis by performing it, the presence of these paintings creates some sense of the storytellers being real and alive. I have included the photographs I took and the description I have provided to Sarkar in the following chart. The descriptions are very much directive, and were in response to his questions and to help him imagine the people who are telling their stories. The written descriptions were initially written in Bangla. I have translated them here for convenience.



Name	Photograph	Description needed for the painter
Researcher as Baisakhi		<p>South Indian, Hindu. She is on her mid-thirties. About same height as mine. Face shape is similar to me, skin would be little bit darker, and lips would be fuller than mine. Wavy long black hair laying open on her back. She would have big beautiful eyes with deep black eyeballs. Although she has not put any eyeliner, her eyes are naturally eye lined. A small vermilion bindi is spotting in between her eyebrows. Vermilion on the parting of the hair can be also slightly noticeable. Gold thin bangles on both of the wrists, gold stud on ears, a gold nose pin and a long gold chain are present. She is wearing casual <i>kameez and churidar</i><sup>13</sup> made of cotton without a scarf. She is sitting comfortably on a sofa in the living area of her house. She took a pillow from the sofa under her arms and in a cosy mood to tell stories. From her sitting area, one can see traditional brass utensils stacked beside the dishwashing basin in her open plan kitchen.</p>

<sup>13</sup> Common dress for South Asian women, Long tunic and leggings.



Researcher  
as Ashari



Sri Lankan Catholic on her late fifties. Same height as mine strong and well maintained physical structure. There are very little wrinkles on the skin compared to age, some fine lines are noticeable on the forehead. Only age can be understandable from her grey hairs. All the hair is tied in a bun on top of the head. Oval face, dark skin, medium shaped eyes, fine nose and she gets dimples on her cheeks while laughing. Rimless heavy power glasses standing on her nose, eyes could be seen through the glasses. Nails are shaped and painted. The chain on her neck is not very long, in which the little gold cross is shining on the skin. The little diamond earring on the ears. Wearing deep-coloured long skirts, light-coloured loose fitted shirt and a deep blue cardigan on top of that. A purple coloured soft furry slippers are on her legs. She is sitting very modestly on a sofa in the living area of her house. Very soft carpet, a sophisticated leather sofa, a small marble side table is standing beside the sofa is noticeable. On top of the table, a gorgeous table lamp is standing on a decorated red silk mat. There is a glass coffee table in front of the sofa, small decoration pieces of crystals are shining there. A landscape painting on a golden frame is hanging on the wall that is on the back of the sofa.

<p>Researcher as Ashshin</p>		<p>Nepali Hindu, in her middle thirties. Looks like she is on her twenties. Height should be around 5 feet. Shoulder height nicely trimmed hair. Square face, tanned skin colour, flat nose, small eyes, fine lips, and there is no prominent makeup on her face. Gentle smile on the face. Wearing fitted jeans pants and jackets, and magenta T-shirts. An oxidised silver chain is on her neck that comes down to her chest; an 'om' designed locket is hanging on that. There is a watch on one wrist, and some wristlets are on the other. There are many rings in the fingers of both hands. Nail-shaped and painted. Canvas shoes on legs. Sitting in the office common-room, close to a window on a sofa, small round table in front. The sunlight is coming from the window on her face. There is a glass of water on the table along with a magazine, and her car keys where the shape of a Nepali Temple model is noticeable.</p>
<p>Researcher as Zuleika</p>		<p>Pakistani Punjabi on her late thirties. Slim and strong body, 5 feet 5-6 inches height. Pale skin colour; suntanned and became reddish. Small sharp eyes, eyeballs are grey. Delicate nose, and delicate lips. Long face, little smile; does not show teeth when smiles. Wearing tidy hijab, knee long loose fitted blue shirts and black pants. She is sitting on her study table at her office. Prints of the verses of the Quran are hanging on the wall in front of the table. On the table the Al Quran and the handbook of the quantitative methodology are noticeable. The computer monitor is on, and the wallpaper of the screen is also showing some Arabic lines. No jewellery or makeup is noticeable.</p>



<p>Researcher as Kartik</p>		<p>Bengali Muslim, on his late twenties. Height, 5 feet 7-8 inches tall. Fit and strong structure. Full lips, though covered by moustaches. Fair skin, suntanned. Long face, sharp jaw, big eyes, brown eyeballs, nearly joined thick eyebrows. Always smiling warmly. Did not shave for couple of days. Wearing Jeans pants, polo shirts and heavy jackets. A ring is visible on the ring finger of the left hand. A heavy watch is on the right wrist. Baseball cap on the head. Some black hairs are visible around the cap. Black rectangular framed power glasses are standing on medium sharp nose. Sitting at a coffee shop, a mug coffee on the front table, wallet and car keys are on the table.</p>
<p>Researcher as Poush</p>		<p>Bengali Muslim. Height, 5 feet 1 or 2 inches. Average health. On her late forties. Shoulder height trimmed silky hair; age has made the hair lighter. Henna coloured hair, the hairstyle is making her younger than her age. Small forehead, very fair skin, delicate but strong nose, fine pink lips, tiny eyes under shaped eyebrows. She wears glasses in golden frame. She gives a big smile. When smiles a lost tooth at upper left corner is noticeable. There are unclear fine lines between the two eyebrows. She is wearing a beige coloured cardigan on a green top, and the veil/scarf is loose on the head. The light green and semi-transparent veil do not cover the hair. Also, on down she is wearing homey flannel trousers. Sitting on the sofa of the living room of her house. The small sofa pillows are covered with <i>nakshi katha</i><sup>14</sup> fabric. There is a Harmonium and Tabla on a shelf behind the sofa. There is a red nakshi</p>

<sup>14</sup> Bengali traditional hand embroidery.

		katha wall mat hanging on the back wall if the sofa. There are teacups and some picture albums on the tea table. She is wearing a thin gold chain on the neck, shiny diamond nose pin, and three gold rings.
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Table 3.2: Descriptions for the painter.

### Sharing the findings

I have decided to present my findings as dramatic monologues. With the monologues, the stories came out from the analytic and descriptive texts and became the voice of the participants. For each case I have given an initial small introduction of the character, then I placed the painting of the character and then the character tells his or her story as a dramatic monologue. Even though I cut and arranged the interview dialogues in the monologues, I have used the verbatim words of the participants. I have developed each monologue in a way that captures the personality as well as the views of each participant. For instance, I give an example from Baisakhi's monologue. Here she is explaining the way she values living in a community that she has received from her native context, and she is missing this value in her children's learning in Christchurch. I developed the monologue from three different interview sessions and I here use three different fonts to indicate the different sessions.

There is no *I* in my culture, it is all about *Us*. If a crow gets hurt, hundreds of crows will come and start making a noise, and try to help that wounded crow. This is the art of nature, this is the sense of community. But here I do not see the children are learning it from the school or from the wider community and I feel disappointed. We believe nothing is ours. Even at home we are not allowed to say *my laptop*, *my room*. Everything around us should be shared. I feel this sense of community in Māori culture, but not in Kiwi.

After writing each monologue in each case, I followed it with a narrative discussion of complexities embedded it in. When I constructed the discussion for each monologue I looked for the big story themes in each. Then I have structured each discussion following the key themes, explicating further, if needed, with direct material from the interviews. In addition, I have aligned some of the emerging themes with concepts in the relevant literature,

particularly when they relate to the issues that are important to New Zealand or in the global context. At the end of the discussion, I have extrapolated the main themes from each case. These final sections involve commentary and a link forward to the final chapter in which the key themes are drawn together and their implications discussed.

Within the dramatic monologues, I have used tense just the way the parents used it. However, I have treated the finished monologue as an artefact, and so it is frozen in terms of time. Therefore, in the following discussions, I decided to predominantly use the present tense to acknowledge the monologue as an artefact that has been constructed. Inside any quotation, however, I have used tense as the respondent did.

A further concluding chapter follows where I draw together the themes across all the cases. I have discussed the implications of the research and highlighted possible further research in this area of study.

In addition, I have prefaced my presentation of the cases by their context in Chapter Two where I have offered an overall investigation of the fluent and multi-layered context in which these cases occur. I also offer a discussion of what it means to be South Asian.

### **Ethical considerations**

The ethical aspects of this study have been initially addressed following the ethical guidelines of Educational Research Human Ethics Committee (ERHEC) of the College of Education, Health and Human Development, University of Canterbury, from which I gained ethical approval. These guidelines protect the human rights and welfare of the participants. I have maintained all the authorised guidelines all through my research journey, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity. Pseudonyms have been used for protecting the identity of the respondents. An information letter and a consent form were prepared to describe the purpose and significance of the study, data collection methods, and how the information will be used. The documents were given to the participants to allow them to decide about their involvement in the research. The consent letter also informed them about their right to withdraw at any time and for any reason. Copies of their permission have been kept as a record. For maintaining anonymity, face-to-face interviews were conducted individually, none of the participants know about each other.

Even though the participants had an information sheet prior to the first interview, at the interview session I thoroughly discussed all the information again so that they would have a clear understanding about my intention, expectations and role in the sessions. The study allowed all participants to explain everything with their own point of view. Participants were provided with the transcriptions of the interviews to ensure accuracy. Participants were assured that they would not be identified by their name. They permitted me to quote from their interviews in the thesis and in conference presentations and publications. The paintings were made with the consent of the participants. The painter did not see the pictures of the participants. The painter also has known them only by their pseudonyms. The paintings were sent back to the participants and have been used in this thesis with their approval. Anonymity and confidentiality have been maintained all through the process. All participation was voluntary, and I thanked each participant with a personal hand-written note. Equally importantly I have sought to be truthful to the intention of the participants. I have not belittled or critiqued their attitudes; and although I do critically analyse them I constantly seek to do so with respect to the participants' intentions, respecting their integrity. I have tried to honour their cultural values and not to impose my own.

### **Boundaries of the study**

By choosing six different cases, I wanted to present a relatively wide range of experiences that show diversity and complexity. On the other hand, I am not suggesting that these cases represent all the stories of South Asian immigrants, and even less that they are representative of immigrants in general. Instead, I think they are sufficient to offer opportunity for parents, teachers in the school and policymakers to probe and increasingly understand the diversity and complexity of immigrants' situations and to prompt further research.

## **Chapter Four: Review of related Literature**

This chapter reviews major works in literature that have guided the development of the conceptual background for this research. More specifically I have developed this section by concentrating on the interconnecting concepts that background how immigrant students and their parents are placed in education, and how they are positioned in terms of the Treaty relationship and multiculturalism within a New Zealand context. The chapter also reviews concepts of culture, cultural transmission and acculturation of immigrants. As there are still limited studies of how immigrant parents from South Asia teach culture to their children in a New Zealand context, I have focused mainly on international studies as well as drawing on the work that relates directly to New Zealand.

I begin with a brief review of New Zealand studies that have investigated the experiences of South Asian parents of engagement in their children's education. Afterwards, I examine the global ideas in this discourse.

### **South Asian migrant parents' engagement and expectations in New Zealand schools**

There are very few studies that describe the engagement and expectations of migrant parents from South Asia in New Zealand. Within the limited resource, I have highlighted those which are most relevant for my research.

Guo (2005) explored parents' views in regards to the parent-teacher relationship in early childhood education in New Zealand and noted some major barriers in improving this relationship with migrant parents from Asian (East, Southeast and South Asia) origin. She studied six Asian immigrant parents and twenty-six early childhood education teachers. Information from parents and teachers was collected through unstructured interviews in professional development workshops. Guo found that the teachers described the Asian parents as mostly respectful and interested in engage; however, teachers' work became challenging because of the language and cultural differences. On the other hand, she found that the parents in her study were reluctant to play an active role in their children's early childhood education predominantly because they did not know the way to be useful in a childcare set up. The researcher found that such parents "did not: (a) feel confident to work with New Zealand teachers, (b) think it was necessary to work with them and (c) have time to



work with them” (p.130). Four recommendations for the teachers to overcome these barriers were made in the same study: they may need to (1) understand Asian core values to play the role of teachers and also be familiar with the values and beliefs of migrant families from Asia, (2) adopt some specific strategy for communicating with such parents, (3) have regular and informal parent-teacher interaction, and (4) act as a resource person for such parents by making time available to know about their family and cultural contexts.

Lewin et al. (2011) explored the Indian migrants’ settlement experience. They narrated the experiences and expectations of parents from such communities, regarding their children’s education. They collected information by holding in-depth interviews with seven employers and twenty employees originally from India. They argued that many of the participants were happy regarding their children’s school education in New Zealand because the children were under less pressure in education and expected a better future compared to their country of origin. However, the study also reported one participant’s disagreement with the majority response who felt the current school education was lacking compared to India in terms of in-school academic activities. Similar findings were found in Martis’ (2016) study. Martis examined twenty Indian male migrants in New Zealand in his ethnographic study and narrated the participants’ settlement experiences, describing their expectations, hardships and experiences of conflicts as well as the celebratory tales of achievements. The participants appreciated the New Zealand school education system as it is less stressful for their children, affordable, and supportive for migrant students. In his findings, Martis stated that although for migrants internationally school enrolment is seen to be a common stress factor in the early settlement phase this is not true in New Zealand because the participants stated that the process was effortless, fast and very comfortable. The participants in his study compared their children’s current education system with that in their own home country and stated that New Zealand school education is more effective; they are happy that their children do not need after-school tuition to get good scores in exams, that their children are bringing good results with surprisingly less pressure and they have better opportunity for play and entertainment.

Mutch and Collins (2012) reported a study conducted by the Education Review Office that externally evaluated the engagement of 233 New Zealand schools (180 primary and 53 secondary) with parents and whānau. Four strategies were used to collect data. First, 4000 parents participated in this study through face-to-face, phone and email interviews. Second, a

questionnaire was used with 500 parents asking information about their experiences of school involvement. Third, 235 multi-ethnic parents participated in discussion through 34 facilitated discussion groups. Lastly, to see best practice, eight case studies from 52 schools were carried out. The researchers noted that the recent changes in migration patterns had been influential in reshaping educational experiences. They noted the development of multi-ethnic schools. They advocated that six factors are crucial for effective engagement in the New Zealand school context; these are: leadership, relationships, school culture, partnerships, community networks, and communication. Mutch and Collins also highlighted the factors which enable the parents from diverse ethnic backgrounds to feel confident to engage in their children's school activities. The parents in their research identified that the main factor is the relationship between the parents and their children's teachers; when teachers showed willingness in learning students' backgrounds and showed concern about students' particular needs and habits parents became more confident in engaging with the school activity.

The studies reported focus on school perspectives, including recommendations of how schools can engage with ethnically diverse parents. Although some studies involved interviews with parents, the content and structure of the interviews was determined by the researchers. The studies did not focus on what parents want to teach their children about their own culture and how they want the school to support them, nor did they address how parents seek to teach their children about the culture they have migrated into. How parents perceive their aspirations and roles in these two areas is, therefore, still to be explored. The narratives presented in Chapters Five to Ten provide accounts, in their own terms, of parents' settlement experiences and of their intentions and practices about teaching cultural knowledge and values to their children.

### **Position of immigrant students and their parents in national and international studies**

Many research publications on immigrant student-parent pedagogy have supported a *deficit model of difference* (for example Gibson, 2000; Glick & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Levels, Dronkers & Kraaykamp, 2008; Bitew, Ferguson, & Dixon, 2008; Bitew & Ferguson, 2010). Dei (2001) criticised this model which positions immigrants' cultural differences as equivalent to deficiency and views the knowledge of immigrant parents from developing countries as inferior, substandard, incompatible, therefore invalid. In many countries with an

Anglo-European majority population, the cultural differences are often described similarly to how Nieto (1999) states, "...differences are commonly viewed as temporary, if troublesome, barriers to learning. Consequently, students of diverse backgrounds are treated as walking sets of deficiencies, as if they had nothing to bring to the educational enterprise" (p. 34). In the following discussion, I have reviewed the studies with deficit theorisation and after that I have included the existing literature that offers a contrasting theory of observing the differences as diversity.

### *Comparison*

The majority of international studies have tended to evidence a dominating perspective that *compares* immigrant children to mainstream children to assess their adaptation to the education system of the destination country. Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin (2009) conducted longitudinal research on immigrant newcomer students of American schools and found that these children from non-English speaking immigrant families begin their education in the host country in a more vulnerable position in academic engagement and school performance compared to their native-born classmates, but over time, with socialisation in their schools, they may draw level. Various researchers (Craft, 2011; Gándara, 1994; Orfield, 2002; Ruiz-de-Velasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2001) from various contexts have reported data involving a range of academic indicators, such as achievement tests, grades, dropout rates and enrolments, showing the unsatisfactory performance of minority group students.

### *Family support*

Another aspect that is often described in terms that suggest deficiency is *parental/family support*; lack of parental support is seen to make difficulties of collaborating with the schools and affects children's educational outcomes. Although the Te Kōtahitanga (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003) project was concentrated on indigenous Māori students' achievement, it gave significant insights into this construct of deficiency. It gave two different perspectives about the reasons for students' poor educational achievement. On one hand, the students, their parents, principals and few of the teachers suggested the reason for the poor achievement was the quality of classroom interaction. On the other hand, most of the teachers suggested the main problem was the children and/or their family circumstances. In the United States some studies (Fuligini, 1997; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suárez-Orozco &

Suárez-Orozco, 1995) have suggested that most of the immigrant groups are linked with poor academic achievement where family influences are identified as deficit factors and it is suggested that these factors be controlled, governed, and moderated by the schools' standards. Bitew, Ferguson and Dixon (2008) studied Ethiopian-Australian students' secondary school experiences and their findings gave a picture of language limitations and cultural barriers along with deficiency of educational and financial support from home. Lareau (2011) described how parents from the middle-class dominant group usually preserve a sense of legitimacy or rightness. She stated that those parents have the cultural and social resources to build up their confidence; they have the confidence to demand schools' development to work in their children's favour. On the other hand, she reported, parents belonging to the non-dominant groups or the minority groups lack the basis to preserve the same level of confidence and lack the cultural resources to respond and work in collaboration with their children's schools.

### *Language*

It has been suggested that the problem of unsatisfactory academic performance can be resolved through improving parents' *language* efficiency. A lack of English language proficiency in different immigrant parent-student groups has been found in many studies conducted in the United States (for example, Rosenthal, Baker, & Ginsburg, 1983; Cosden, Zimmer, Reyes & Gutierrez, 1995; Gibson, 2000; Glick & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009) and this lack is identified as the major cause for the unsatisfactory school performance of many immigrant children. It has been stated in many studies (for example, McNaughton, Lai, MacDonald & Farry, 2004; McNaughton, MacDonald, Amituanai-Toloa, Lai, & Farry, 2006) that, in New Zealand, many students from other than only English language speaking background communities show low achievement, and the majority of these communities come from the southern part of Auckland, classified as 'low socio-economic' communities. Clinton, Hattie, and Dixon (2007) reported that several parents (most of them were from Māori and Pasifika community) from a lower socio-economic background in the Flaxmere, New Zealand context lack understanding of the language, often because they had adverse experiences in school themselves. They found that at the beginning of the study the parents were less involved in their children's education "...because of a lack of confidence, negative attitudes based on past experiences, and limited understanding of what learning is about" (p. 23). They also found that those parents showed

honest intention to assist their children, and after the intervention of the Flaxmere Project, showed considerable progress in learning the language of schooling and learning how to become involved in their children's education. Clinton and Hattie (2011) also studied high school students' perceptions of parental involvement in the same context and in their study one of the suggested implications to improve parental involvement was assisting the parents to become efficient in the language of the school learning environment.

### *Teachers' preparation*

Another feature that is repeatedly addressed in studies of education involving immigrant students and their parents is lack of multi-ethnic teachers as well as lack of teachers' readiness to work with immigrant students and their parents. It has been suggested in North American models of educational improvement to increase parental involvement mostly in an institution-based form. However, Guo (2012a) contended that unsatisfactory results of many such parental involvement activity models come from a range of factors such as barriers related to class as well as race, educators' cultural biases, low expectations from immigrant parents, and from educators' keeping a distance that prevents them learning the values of migrant parents as they see their behaviours as foreign. Howard (2010) gave importance to the issue that the New Zealand student population has grown increasingly multi-ethnic but the ethnic composition of the education providers has stayed relatively static and in her study the participants, "perceived advantages in having a more ethnically representative teaching workforce and a teaching profession whose training prepared them to work effectively with students from diverse language and cultural backgrounds" (p. 14). Hollins and Guzman (2005), Li (2004) and Turner (2007) found that teachers did not have the professional preparation needed to work efficiently with immigrants. Immigrant students may need an approach in their learning environment that is culturally suited to their needs, similar to that which the native children receive in educational institutes. For instance, Humpage (2009) stated that Somali classrooms are strategically developed as teacher-centred that is they are based on memorisation, recitation and note taking. Therefore while working in a Christchurch school environment she found that many Somali teenage refugee students find it difficult to cope with the student-centred approaches, feel embarrassed to show poor schoolwork and fall behind. In another New Zealand based study which was conducted in two English language schools, Li (2004) reported that some teachers' adoption of the interactive teaching approach is leading the Asian immigrant students to have a negative learning experience. The writer

criticised the approach, saying it is culturally incompatible with the background of those immigrant students.

### *Challenges due to the cultural identity of Muslims in particular*

In a United States context, Palmer (1998) claimed that teachers are facing challenges in a culturally diverse environment because of their discomfort with diversity. McDonough and Hoodfar (2005) and Guo, (2011), writing in a Canadian context, claimed that after the September 11th event especially there is a fear of Muslims who are being treated as a threat to the peace and safety of Western nations. Maira (2014) argued that South Asians from different backgrounds are getting a similar response as a homogenous ‘Muslim’ threat, and people treat them as the objects of suspicion, surveillance and violence in America. Inman, McCormack, and Walker (2012) argued that because of the increasing hostility and prejudice towards Muslims in the wider society of England, Muslim children have been experiencing Islamophobia as a specific form of interethnic violence in schools. In an Australian context, Poynting and Mason (2008) reported a range of actions which are discriminatory towards Muslims. They argued that Islamophobia was deliberately present in those actions. They reported that in 2005 Islamic leaders were instructed by the Prime Minister to confirm that the *Australian Values* were being taught in the thirty Islamic schools, otherwise the government might raid the school and the mosques to make sure that no terrorism was being promoted. Dobson, (2012) found that Muslim women are experiencing a negatively stereotyped reaction from public and media and having an “othered” identity in a New Zealand context. In a Christchurch context, Humpage (2009) described, from a Muslim refugee’s perspective, that the school is becoming a culturally unsafe place for all the Muslim students. Smyth (2013) also found instances in the primary schools of Wellington where Somali students were culturally bullied by their peers and acknowledged that they found it is uncomfortable to present their Muslim identity at the school. The challenges Muslim parents and their children face are important aspects of the narratives presented in Chapters Eight and Nine.

### *In contrast*

In contrast to the concept of less progress in education and less support of minority parents, Kao (1995) found, from a comparative study of Asian and white American eighth graders that some Asian American subgroups are showing higher math scores compared to their

white classmates and their cultural and behavioural differences significantly influence this achievement. From his longitudinal quantitative analysis, she has found that “South Asians outrank all other Asian groups in parental socioeconomic status, educational aspirations, home educational resources, outside classes, and in the number of rules about homework and so forth” (p.141). Similarly, Turner, Rubie-Davies and Webber (2015) argued in their mixed method research based in Auckland that the teachers’ expectation of students’ mathematics achievement changes depending on the ethnicity of the student, and the researchers have found that the teachers have high expectations from Asian and Pākehā students and low expectation from Pasifika and Māori students and their families. The findings of Wu’s (2011) study on immigrant Chinese mothers in a New Zealand context, also did not match with how Lareau (2011) observed them as less vocal than the dominant middle-class group. Wu (2011) found the Asian parents significantly engaged in their children’s early childhood education and described them as follows, “They are able, and they are strategically and actively engaged in their children’s education... They happily embraced and accepted some of the dominant ideas of early childhood education but also rejected or selectively utilised mainstream educational ideas; they showed trust in the professionals and they also criticised teachers’ practices and some government policies” (p. 164). In contrast to findings of Islamophobia at school, Shepard (2006) found that, although no mainstream schools provide any specific Islamic education, many of the schools (depending on the attitude of the headmasters and needs of the students or parents) were cooperative in reasonably accommodating the changes in uniform, allowing prayer time for Jummah<sup>15</sup>, considering the matters of diet, and in some cases offering a space for prayer. Similarly, Robertson and Miller (2007) reported the perspective of teachers from three schools in Hamilton in their qualitative study. While describing the findings regarding the philosophy of community in the school the researchers found that all the teachers asserted that they have respect for the beliefs that lead to the clothing styles of various ethnic groups, especially for Muslim girls wearing headscarves. Teachers in that (2007) study talked about their respect for the practice of Muslim girls wearing headscarves while swimming.

### *Difference as diversity*

Dei (1996) argued that tendency to view the concept of difference as deficit creates obstructions to the development of teachers’ knowledge about diversity, and so teachers may

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<sup>15</sup> Friday noontime congregational prayer for Muslims.

overlook the value of diversity, give less importance to learning processes of the individual children that embrace their own culture. Also argued that if the teacher either strives to minimise differences or take differences as a barrier it is a problem in the overall educational process. Thus, Cummins (1979, 2001) and Dei (1996) asserted that education providers tend to regard the characteristics of different cultural groups as obstacles and rarely as substitute strengths to assist in understanding diversity and developing practices, expertise, knowledge and viewpoints. In contrast to this fear of diversity and to the concept of difference as deficit Guo (2011, 2012a, 2012b) conceptualised differences as diversity and gave importance to the knowledge, values and belief of the immigrant parents and she has contended that how such parents' knowledge systems and attitudes to their children's education are viewed impacts on the children's education. She (2012a) advocated the significance of supporting pre-service teachers, school teachers and administrators in Canada to modify their depiction of cultural diversity from a Eurocentric perspective, to recognise immigrant students' and parents' knowledge, culture, language and religion, and make use of them as resources of education. Stuart and Ward (2011) have demonstrated that stronger bonds with ethnic culture in migrants from South Asia in New Zealand have shown improved adjustment across a range of areas, including better school adjustment and academic performance, greater self-esteem, enriched life satisfaction, and better approval of other cultural groups. One of the schools amongst the three schools in Robertson and Miller's (2007) study is Daffodil School and the researchers found from this school that listening to all the children's stories of their home from parents and grandparents can be a good way of synchronising the home and community inside the classroom. They noted that in Daffodil School all the teachers do not use or believe in the term "minority" in their teaching-learning processes and they claim that they are successfully engaging with the richness of cultures.

Therefore these discussions provide a platform for the propositions developed in this thesis: that a shift in the perception of education providers and researchers from regarding differences in multi-ethnic groups as deficit to regarding them as diversity can enrich and develop multicultural education environments and that this process is fostered by knowing the stories of the family, understanding the parents' approaches to knowledge and recognising their aspirations and means for transmitting culture to their children. Although these issues are significant, there is still a gap in research about how they impact on South Asian immigrants in New Zealand. In particular there is a gap in research that presents such parents' points of view in depth. When immigrant parents are viewed from the outside they



are often constructed in terms of difference and potential problems. The exploration in this study of parental perspectives and aspirations through their own narratives allows schools, teachers and members of the wider community opportunity to appreciate their agency as well as their concerns.

### **The Treaty of Waitangi and its relationship with migration**

The second domain of my exploration of research literature is directly related to the culture which is new to immigrant parents, New Zealand's indigenous culture. A study involving education in New Zealand would not be complete without acknowledging New Zealand's unique history and the Treaty of Waitangi plays a vital role in this history. Therefore, here I review literature which addresses the history of the Treaty and the Treaty relationship. As discussed in Chapter Two, I am aware that my understanding of the literature and the issues have an evolving nature due to my own position as an immigrant and to the ever-shifting nuances of socio-political significance given to the Treaty by sectors within New Zealand society. I also acknowledge that just as my perception and understandings have evolved considerably throughout this study this evolution of understanding may continue if I continue to live New Zealand as an immigrant parent. I have tried to look through the different lenses of Māori and Pākehā academics.

The Ministry for Culture and Heritage (2017) described Te Tiriti o Waitangi or the Treaty of Waitangi as the document that establishes a relationship within New Zealand between the two signatory parties, Māori and Pākehā. The Treaty was signed on 6 February 1840 by the British Crown and chiefs in the region of Waitangi. Later it was carried around the country and signed by a total of 540 Māori chiefs. The Ministry for Culture and Heritage (2017) explained that the Treaty promises partnership, protection, and participation of both the Māori and Pākehā signatories. With a dramatic history, now it is considered as the most significant and the founding document of this country. Various historians (Orange, 2012; Anderson, Binney, & Harris, 2015) explained that it was not easy to convince the Māori chiefs to sign the Treaty. However Orange (2012) recorded that as a consequence of successive debates they agreed to sign the Treaty to enrich their resources with increasing European trade, to have confirmed control over the sale of land to Europeans and to stop their internal fighting. Anderson, Binney and Harris (2015) cited the words of Tāmāti Waka Nene,

who at that time was an active advocate of the Treaty: “What did we do before the Pākehā came? We fought, we fought continually. But now we can plant our grounds, and the Pākehā will bring plenty of trade to our shores. Then let us keep him here. Let us all be friends together. I am walking beside the Pākehā. I’ll sign the pukapuka<sup>16</sup>” (p.197).

Although the Treaty was established with the commitment to bring harmony, different understanding and breaches of the treaty brought conflict. The document was written in English and then translated into Māori overnight by the missionary Henry Williams, and most of the Māori chiefs signed the Māori version which is known as *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* (Orange, 2012). In some very significant places the first and second articles of the two texts carried dissimilar meanings, such as concepts like *sovereignty* and *exclusive and undisturbed possession* was translated into *kawanatanga* (governance) and *te tino rangatiratanga* (chieftainship) which created different understandings of what degrees of control were being allocated to the British Crown (Orange, 2011). Anderson, Binney and Harris (2015) argued that most of the Māori chiefs signed their names or put their marks on Te Tiriti, trusting that they were retaining their authority over their own people. The writers explained that it was not until much later that the chiefs understood their loss. They recorded that the first significant attempt to show objection to the government was the flagstaff conflict started on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1944 and then wars and conflicts continued. Gibbs (2005), Kawharu (1989), Orange (2011), Stokes (1992) and the Waitangi Tribunal Report (1986) variously reported how society changed and how during thirty years of rigorous battle Māori tribes not only lost their land but also spiralled downwards in terms of their manpower, trade, resources, authority and more importantly language and culture.

British traditions and culture grew into the dominant ones, and Māori were expected to assimilate into the superior European ‘white’ culture of the settlers and the colonial government, which resulted in a threat to the existence of Māori language and culture. Nairn et al. (2006) reported that, historically, Māori have faced racist actions and been expected to progress in institutional settings which are antagonistic to their language and culture. Anderson, Binney and Harris (2015) noted how New Zealand was labelled with its white Eurocentric monoculture, from government policies to every aspect of life New Zealand. Kingi (2007) reported that Māori de-population occurred due to various reasons, for instance, the land and tribal wars, introductions of diseases, and significantly cultural decay

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<sup>16</sup> *Pukapuka* is a Māori transliteration of the word *book*. It can be understood here to mean the *document*.

prominently caused by the abandonment of numerous social structures and practices which had been used to facilitate and protect Māori health for centuries. Nairn and McCreanor (1991), as well as Hill (2010), noted that Māori had been visibly disadvantaged economically, socially, culturally and Pākehā culture was afforded eminence until mid 1970s when activists started to bring changes to the situation that brought the Māori renaissance. In 1977, the full New Zealand citizenship of Māori was established. Derby (2011) reported that since the mid-1980s New Zealand started to embrace its bicultural ideology by recognising the relationship between indigenous Māori and settler Pākehā on the basis of the Treaty of Waitangi and began to often be referred to as Aotearoa<sup>17</sup>- New Zealand. He noted that a number of symbolic events crystallised the renaissance, including recognition of Waitangi Day as the national day and establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal and passing of the Treaty of Waitangi Act. Derby (2011) along with Harris and Williams (2015), reported that the Treaty became elevated to the status of the foundation document of New Zealand and by 1990s the Waitangi Tribunal progressively worked towards understanding and articulating the implications of the articles of the Treaty. Concurrently the government developed a number of principles based on its understanding of the meaning of the Treaty for contemporary New Zealand society that, as Hayward (2012) reported, were to be utilised in government policy, new laws, government agencies and court decisions.

Various changes in the immigration policy increased the number of immigrants rapidly, and De Bres (2003) and Zodgekar (2005) stated the boom in immigration has brought a need to re-establish the importance of the bicultural relationship in terms of the relationship of multicultural and multi-ethnic immigrants to the indigenous people of the land. Fleras and Spoonley (1999) described that the Treaty relationship has evolved with the aim for integrating Māori culture into the country's symbolic identity as well as providing political justice and overall social inclusion of multiculturalism in resolving the challenges of post-colonial New Zealand. Nevertheless, many Māori academics and policymakers took the mass increment of immigrants negatively and Walker (1995) reports that Māori recommendations related to immigration policies were glossed over. Bedford, Ho and Lidgard (2002) stated, "Immigration was one catalyst for the renaissance of Māori culture and political awareness in the 1970s which lead to the growing debate over a bicultural society" (p. 42). Zodgekar (2005) reported that Māori were concerned about the growing immigrant intakes caused by

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<sup>17</sup> Aotearoa is the terms preferred by some Māori groups to name New Zealand.

government's immigration policies based on the ideology of multiculturalism and saw this as a challenge to their rights as Treaty of Waitangi partners and to their efforts for greater bicultural power sharing. De Bres (2003) also pointed out that while the concept of multiculturalism seeks to identify and resolve the problem of perceived superiority of the Anglic population to that of recent immigrants, the nature of its demand for equality also challenges the role of Māori as the important indigenous people, or tangata whenua, of New Zealand.

According to Walker (1995), insufficient research has been conducted about the relationship between Māori and the impact of immigration policy that is resulting in a greater number of immigrants. Special focus is needed, he argued, on the issues relating to the Treaty of Waitangi. Walker (1995, 2004) and Eaton (2007) acknowledged that there was a significant lack of consultation with indigenous Māori regarding the Crown's immigration programme and that this is a clear transgression of the Treaty partnership. Walker (1995) was concerned that because immigration policy concentrated purely on economic growth, new migrants may lack the commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. And he argued that "the government's immigration policy must be seen for what it is, a covert strategy to suppress the counter-hegemonic struggle of the Māori by swamping them with outsiders who are not obliged to them by the Treaty" (p. 292).

However, Vasil and Yoon, (1996) and the Waitangi Tribunal (2004, 2011) variously advocated that the Treaty is regarded as the constitutional framework which covers all the people in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Treaty does not exclude but includes immigrants without undermining their cultural and ethnic origins. Nayar (2013) and Jamnadas (as cited in Nayar 2009) linked the three *Treaty principles* to an immigrant's context. Jamnadas stated that firstly the Treaty promises the *protection* of every culture which includes immigrants' culture as well; secondly immigrants leaving their country behind and coming to the new land come with the intention of *participation*, which is the second Treaty principle; and finally, the Treaty secures the equal right of citizenship, and as citizens of New Zealand immigrants are also significantly recognising partnership by contributing to building the society. Nayar (2013) advocated that the Treaty itself has secured the position of immigrants and described, "te Tiriti o Waitangi, as a social policy document, places Aotearoa New Zealand in a unique position compared to many other multicultural countries globally; wherein all citizens, regardless of their ethnic origins, have the opportunity and entitlement to engage in

occupations and cultural practices that are fundamental to their ethnic and cultural identity” (p. 392). Regarding the national identity debate, on the other hand, Desouza (2004) argued that the non-indigenous non-white ‘others’ are being excluded from the debate and discussion regarding the future of this country which is their home too. Martis (2016) and Omura (2009, 2014) have noted that the perceptions and settlement experiences of non-indigenous ethnic minorities in Aotearoa New Zealand are also very important in this discourse and there is a need for research about how the new migrants are observing the Treaty. DeSouza and Cormack (2009), Pearson and Ongley (1996) have argued the need of further research and explained that because of the lack of a locally suitable multicultural framework that addresses the Treaty, immigrant and non-indigenous ethnic communities struggle to place themselves within a Treaty-based society of Aotearoa New Zealand. The narratives in this study highlight aspects of a struggle to understand the implications of the Treaty in the lives of some immigrants.

### **Diversity in New Zealand**

Beaglehole (2019) reported that from 1986 and 1991 the active recruitment of skilled and entrepreneur immigrants developed, which caused an enormous burst in Asian migration. Ghosh (2015) reported that, since the late 1980s, Asian immigrants’ numbers have been increasing massively: statistics reports are indicating this group as the fastest growing population in New Zealand and predicting that if the growth rate continues in the same pace, it will become the largest minority group of this country. The place, Christchurch, where this research is situated, also shows reports of an increasing trend of ethnic diversity (Christchurch City Council, 2019). Christchurch City Council (2019) highlighted the major ethnic compositions of this city where the European ethnic category still secures the highest number of the population but with a decreasing trend, and three other categories (Asian, Māori and Pacific) shows an increasing trend. The same report showed that the Asian category, which is the second largest ethnic group of this city, will more than double by 2038 and become 19% of the population. Ghosh (2015) acknowledged that the recent immigration of Asians has been changing the demographic picture of this nation and argued this has boosted the importance of discussing multiculturalism and has also altered the ways people position themselves concerning cultural diversity. Zodgekar (2005) advocated that with the massive flow in new

immigrants a vital concern arises for researchers and policymakers to look at how easily immigrants from various kinds of backgrounds fit into their new country's environment.

The Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research (2012) reported from a survey on national attitudes towards immigrants, immigration and multiculturalism that 89% of the New Zealanders agreed that a pluralistic racial population makes a positive effect on society. Ward and Masgoret (2008) argued that although most the New Zealanders have an optimistic attitude towards migrants, compared to Australian and EU citizens, they evidently perceive immigrants from traditional sources (English speaking countries or with European origin) more favourably. Zodgekar (2005) reported that from workplace to individual level the new immigrants from non-traditional sources struggle to progress at the same pace to the immigrants from traditional sources (UK, USA, Canada and Australia) in terms of income level. He also noted that particularly many recent migrants from non-traditional countries had experienced obstacles while achieving an appropriate job in New Zealand. Zodgekar (2005) and Pio (2005) argued that despite being well qualified, Indian migrants are unfortunately struggling to get recognition of their overseas work experiences and are unable to find suitable employment. Pio's (2005) report on Indian women highlighted the employment difficulties these migrants were having, where a "postgraduate qualified friend was picking strawberries; a bilingual friend in two European languages was doing house-sitting; a highly qualified and experienced professional worked as a cleaner, and the list goes on" (p.89). Lyons, Madden, Chamberlain and Carr (2011) studied undergraduate psychology students in Auckland to explain how young Pākehā New Zealanders discuss and produce the meaning of immigration, immigrants and cultural diversity. They found that while the participants actively claimed themselves as non-racist individuals, they would bring up the racist comments while discussing their nationalist concept of an English speaking 'one society' of New Zealand. In one of their focus group discussions they have found that, while working in a recruitment agency, one of the participants actively favours the job applications of Pākehā more than the immigrants because of her preconception of English language deficiency of immigrants. Spoonley also stated (as cited in Baker, 2019) employers often choose migrants in their workforce, but they have a tendency to prefer migrants from English looking-speaking countries in skilled white collar roles and view Asian migrants as suitable for unskilled and semi-skilled works.

On the other hand, a number of voices have been raised articulating complaints that migrants are depriving New Zealanders of employment (Collins, 2016; Fallow, 2017). Fallow (2017) reported that immigration was one of the most significant issues in the most recent (2017) New

Zealand election. He discussed that the overflow of migrants had been lowering the probability of New Zealanders to get jobs. Collins (2016) also reported that the labour market is becoming overloaded with the pressure of new migrants and young New Zealanders are falling behind in an unemployment crisis. As a result of all such arguments Roy (2017) reported that after the election, the government made changes in policies to tightening immigration rules for controlling the overflow of migrant workers so that the New Zealanders can get into jobs ahead of migrants.

Zodgekar (2005) stated that the struggle of these new migrants is not the only rationale to the claim of discrimination, but they also have to deal with the feeling of exclusion from the mainstream cultural belongingness as a non-indigenous ethnic group. For instance, some of the narratives of Salpitikorala's (2015) New Zealand based study focusing on the perceptions and experiences of the psychotherapists who belong to non-indigenous ethnic minority groups (for example South Asian, Pacific, non-traditional white origin), showed how the participants are feeling excluded in the cultural setup of this country. The participants in her study, experienced a sense of being *other-other*. To explain the *other-other* experience, Salpitikorala stated, "...immigrants and non-indigenous ethnic-minorities face a dual struggle – on the one hand, acculturating and finding a sense of fitting in and belonging within the dominant Pākehā culture, and on the other hand, feeling excluded from the dominant discourse and practices of biculturalism, a discourse that will determine the future direction of their new adopted country" (p.76). One of the participants in Salpitikorala's (2015) research gave a powerful message while explaining his struggle to fit in the cultural context responding to the Māori- Pākehā relationship which serves to exclude the cultural others and stated, "It's only about Māori and [New Zealand] Europeans, this battle, and you are thrust in the middle of it and you have to find your place" (p.53).

Phillips (2013) noted that because of an increasingly multi-ethnic population New Zealand is no longer seen as a society of "Better Britons". However, he also noted that the evolving meaning of what it means culturally to be a New Zealander is a major issue of this century and the diverse interactions of migrant groups with the Treaty partners undoubtedly complicate as well as redefine New Zealand national identity. Zodgekar (2005) explained that the colonial structures have influenced all aspects of life formally and informally from education to employment, from government structure to law and policy, from religion to courtesy language and overall culture, and that both the indigenous Māori and European Pākehā encountered historic and contemporary power changes which influenced the identity-making process. In

addition, Martis (2016) and Zodgekar (2005) stated that South Asian immigrants' experiences are structured and restructured by their own postcolonial influences: first come those of their native country and then the one in which they currently living; these two phases also contributes to processing their identity. Furthermore, Zodgekar (2005) acknowledged that all of these changes endorse that New Zealand has gradually shifted from a mono-cultural privileged society produced by the European colonisers, to the wrenching process of developing a bicultural relationship in many of the government policies about social life. He also reported that progressively this country has moved towards a globally recognised multicultural focus, which is reflected in the attitude of the people who are currently living here. These studies relating, from various perspectives, to immigrants' different experiences and the consequences of settling in New Zealand provided me with a background to the issues that the participants of my study raised in their accounts, and a basis for discussion of the themes that emerged.

## Multiculturalism

Concepts of multiculturalism, as proposed by various scholars (Kalman, 2009; Multiculturalism, n.d; Malik, 2010; Pope, 1995) focus on the preservation of different cultural identities and widely advocate the exercise of equal respect to the various cultural groups within a community and often address the need for policy to promote and maintain a social context in which authorities address the plurality of cultural groups of people and define them by their cultural identity. Taylor (1994) reported an unambiguous relationship between *multiculturalism* and *recognition* in his writing where he used the term multiculturalism as a commitment to uplift identities of marginalised groups and so to change the dominant patterns of representation of their identity. Song (2017) reported that the term multiculturalism had been used to understand and respond to the challenges that come with cultural and religious diversity. While describing multiculturalism Song rejected the concept of the *melting pot* in which people of minority groups were expected to assimilate into the dominant culture to maintain the idea of the collective identity and practice of dominant culture. Ghosh (2015) has argued that various places in the world are experiencing different patterns of multiculturalism because expressions of multiculturalism vary in respect to factors such as the relationship between the nation-state, political-economic-aesthetical influences, the diversity of cultures and ethnicity. In discussing Multiculturalism Babaii (2018) summarised a range of writings that are committed to the ideals of multiculturalism but



represent the non-westerns as unwanted *others*. She argued that there is a wide gap between the expectation of the migrants and their reality which may result in further social complications. She then discussed the literature that proposes three demands of the minority people: the demand of social visibility, fair representation and equal treatment. She reported the proposals by various researchers which promote successful intercultural communication and she suggested that there is an intense need for empirical research to find a coherent model and set of guidelines to find how education can be useful for developing appreciation of cultural diversity. In the context of Finland Hahl and Löfström (2016) studied teacher educators and student-teachers' perceptions of multiculturalism. They reported that the participants generally identified the concept of multiculturalism in relation to international students and kept the natives out of it. The researchers also reported that while the participants were sharing their experience and perceptions of teaching-learning activities in a multicultural context, stereotyping and othering was actively present in their self-positioning strategies. Ang (1996) critically reviewed Australian self-congratulatory official discourse of multiculturalism which addresses the country as one of the most successful multicultural nations. She reported that this claim of being a culturally diverse inclusionary society is not recognising the continuing racialised and ethnicised otherings happening in contemporary Australia. In particular, she focused on the various structural and subjective levels of othering towards Asian migrants and argued that "Indeed, it seems fair to say that acceptance of the values of pluralism and tolerance does not guarantee a disappearance of racism. ...the historical tensions within these 'race relations' are not solved by multiculturalism, but, on the contrary, made more complex and complicated" (p. 38). Singham (2006) argued that for New Zealand another paradigm need to be addressed in multiculturalism alongside reducing inequality based paradigms and he suggested *strength in diversity* paradigm. He explained, "Instead of emphasising the avoidance of problems that could arise from ethnic diversity, we could be focusing on the immense benefits that it brings to this country...we could see ethnic community integration as a global talent management opportunity for us" (p.36). The range of viewpoints and areas of focus indicate that the term multiculturalism is used to talk about a wide and varying range of understandings about how cultural difference may be addressed in society. The positionality of researchers and social theorists is a key element in explanations of what multiculturalism means and of how it should operate. The following section reviews writing about the relationship of positionality to cross-cultural understandings.

## Positionality and consequent sightlines

To describe positionality, many writers have acknowledged that there are dominant discourses that have power; some have sought to disrupt them, some have brought other voices into the arena of discourse. Gilbert (1998) used the term *sightline* in her examination of theatre in Australia and applied this term from the stage to everyday life points of view in order to discuss decolonisation. She explained that when a person goes to a theatre, he would see the stage and the performance from the position where he was seating; with changes in his sitting position his sightline or the way of looking of the performance also changes. For example, if that person gets a seat that blocks his view, he may interpret the performance differently. She placed this idea in a real-life setting and discussed how people's positionality changes the way they look at things, and points out that some positions have more power than others. By having that influential power, the viewpoints of those in dominant positions tend to blot out the sightlines of others and that distorts the way they see reality. Therefore she stresses the importance of bringing Aboriginal sightlines back into Australian theatre so that the Aboriginal people can hear voices that see the world from Aboriginal perspectives and so that others can begin to recognise how Aboriginal people think. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989) discuss post-colonial studies from the viewpoints of the people from the ex-colonies, examining writings from African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries, and Sri Lanka. By positioning their own historic and cultural understandings at the centre of their writing, as well as often bending English to catch their local and cultural patois, the writers discussed have struck back at the dominant discourses of colonialism and offered understandings and reactions based on their own contextualised experience.

Similarly, a Kaupapa Māori philosophical approach looks at the constructs of society with Māori values, knowledge, attitudes and skills (Pihama, Cram and Walker, 2002). Smith (2012) reported that existing methodologies prioritise western ways of conducting research; imperialism, she argued, is rooted in the disciplines of knowledge. She critiqued the colonial paradigm of knowledge from an indigenous Māori positionality and advocated for a decolonising methodology to see what investigation means in terms of doing things in an indigenous way. A key concept in her writing is the importance of ensuring that research supports and increases Māori well-being in terms that are important to Māori.

Deconstructivist writer Spivak (2013) observed in a post-colonial South Asian context that subalternity is a position without identity and so the subaltern cannot speak. A subaltern occupies a junior rank in the army and so is expected to echo his senior officer. In Spivak's theorisation the subaltern represents the colonised populations who are outside the hierarchy of power. She discussed that power and hegemony stays in the centre, and the voices of colonised people stay at the margins of the mainstream discourse. Spivak reported, there are two reasons why the subaltern cannot speak: one is the subaltern might not be heard even if he speaks and the second is when he speaks, he will have already learnt to code his words in the language of the centre. To continue Spivak's argument, in order to hear the subaltern's voice, it is important to be careful about the imposition of externally developed theory or analytic codes on the voices of those who are positioned at the margins of the centre because then they cannot speak.

Winter (2018) examined the colonial discourses present in a geography textbook in England. She wrote that she was inspired by one of her student's work, who was a teacher in South Korea and this provoked her to look at the geography curriculum of her country with a critical lens. Winter successively explores the broad interdisciplinary philosophies that curriculum developers respect, then the contemporary British education policy of promoting fundamental British values. She then disrupts the discourse in the textbook with the critical lenses of the theories of Apple, Todd, Derrida and Levinas. She identifies the implicit presence of Eurocentric values in the geography textbook, and concluded by arguing for a decolonising approach to curriculum.

In varying ways these writers highlight how much positionality and sightlines matter. The ideas of sightlines and positionalities are crucial to this thesis. I have tried to affirm the participants' sightlines, with the understanding that they need to stand in their own terms against the wider framework of dominant discourses. I have wanted to add their voices to those most frequently heard. In my research, I have not sought to unpack the dominant discourses. Rather I have presented the sightlines of the participants, using their own words and constructs of meaning, so that they have the potential to create a dialogue in our communities. Perhaps they may at least partially disrupt dominant discourses; at least they may provoke the idea that there is a multiplicity of ways of looking at experiences.

## Concepts of culture and cultural place

It has been noted by various writers (for example, Kroeber & Parsons 1958; Lebrón, 2013; Schmid, 1992; Baldwin, Faulkner, & Hecht, 2006; Jahoda, 1984; Segall, 1984) that the concept of culture is opaque; it is difficult to define this term. Jahoda (1984) and Segall (1984) agreed that *culture* is the most elusive term of the social sciences and it was quite overwhelming to try to articulate a universally satisfactory definition. Segall (1984) argued that it is very important to understand the *culture* in cross-cultural studies and noted, it is not a single variable, rather it needs a very complex system to analyse it in terms of its contextual components and their relationships. Culture is at the heart of this study and so I report some key definitions of culture that are found in the literature.

A historic definition of culture was given by Kluckhohn (1951): "Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values" (p.86). Another description is given by Kroeber and Parsons (1958), describing culture as "transmitted and created content and patterns of values, ideas, and other symbolic-meaningful systems as factors in the shaping of human behavior and the artifacts produced through behavior" (p. 583). Geertz (1973) defined culture as the symbolic expressions of historically transmitted patterns of symbols, meanings and inherited ideas that are the resources of the communication which is preserved with the development of knowledge and attitude of peoples' life. Taylor and Thoth (2011) stated that one of the most important roles of culture is to offer a stable environment to the group with the objective of ensuring or, at least, enhancing the survival of the group. They also stated that in a wider picture, culture stands for mainstream tendencies, however, it is possible to have "culture within a culture" of smaller section of the population with different cultural elements and themes from the mainstream. Nieto (2008), Taylor and Thoth (2011) variously reported that an additional essential point is that these elements and themes are not biologically inherent in humans, but they are man-made, reliant on geographical, chronological, and sociopolitical contexts and therefore they are certainly learned and taught.

That cultures change through contact with other cultures is variously addressed by researchers. A concept of the third space was developed by Bhabha (1990) and later, in slightly different terms, by Greenwood (1999). In his postcolonial studies, Bhabha (1990)

advocated that culture is not a static entity; it is not an essence that is fixed in time and space instead it has the nature of fluidity, and it is perpetually in motion. He has characterised culture by change, flux and transformation; it is a melting pot in which various elements are continuously being added and so create change. He underlined the nature of culture by its mixed and interconnectedness which he defined as hybridity and termed where this melt occurs by displacing the histories that constitute it as the *third space*. He considered the third space as emerging through various cultural encounters, and as something that cannot be defined in advance. However, Greenwood (2005, 2006, 2015) in her research used Bhabha's metaphor of *third space* in a slightly different way to explain the complex and emergent space of biculturalism in a New Zealand context. She argues that while Māori and Pākehā have their own cultural space, they both develop some complex culture in the middle of two interfaces. She explained that although Māori and Pākehā may retain their own cultures, a new culture may develop through their interaction. Each of them can operate in their own space and also in the shared third space. They can visit each other's space in some ways as the interfaces are not fixed but cannot change their own identity to become the other.

Culture and education are significantly interrelated. Ahmed (2008), Collins and O'Brien (2003), Stevens (2008) variously explained that education intends to guide students in learning culture by sculpting their behaviour towards maturity and regulating them in the direction of their role in society. Weisner (1996) states that culture offers people the *tools for mind* that make human development possible, and education is actively related to human development. He identified that for child development the most influential element is the cultural place of that child. In his consideration, the cultural place gets even more attention than the quality of formal education. He defined the *cultural place* of a child by "...the cultural beliefs, practices, meanings, and ecological setting characteristic of members of that community" (p. 305). The concept of cultural place is a significant aspect of this thesis and more discussion is presented in Chapter Eleven.

### **Cultural transmission and acculturation**

Cultural transmission, as Taylor and Thoth, (2011) defined, is the continuous advancement of passing elements of culture, including attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviour which are transmitted onto and taught to pupils. The introducers of this concept, Cavalli-Sforza and

Feldman (1981) presented it as the generic mechanism for maintaining some cultural features across generations. They categorised cultural transmission as three major kinds: vertical, oblique and horizontal. The first one concentrates on the knowledge which is passed from parents (and or caregivers) to their offspring, the second one relates to unrelated individuals' intergenerational cultural transmission, and finally, the third one reflects the peer learning by which the people from same generation pass and share culture. The major focus of this study is related to the first one.

Grusec and Hastings (2007) suggested that in the cultural transmission process three major terms, enculturation, socialisation and acculturation, merit attention. They explained that the process that takes place in one population's own primary culture to make them competent in that culture is called *enculturation* and the process of *socialisation* denotes the deliberate shaping of the individual by the guidance of the society. They also explained that when the transmission happens in contact with one or more secondary cultures, the process is one of *acculturation*. As Berry (1997) stated, an outcome of fast growth in immigration is that many societies are becoming culturally plural, whereby people from different backgrounds are living together and may have dissimilar status in the power structure. He noted that the acculturation process of the non-dominant group may prominently be shaped by the dominant culture of that culturally plural society.

Acculturation has been variously identified by Berry (2005, 1997), Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936) as the phenomenon that results in changes to the features of the original culture of either or both cultural groups after having continuous first-hand contacts. They explained that this contact and change take place for various reasons, such as migration, colonisation, military attack, tourism, international study, and overseas posting and continues in culturally plural societies. Berry (1992, 2005) explained that it is a long term process and it can take place mutually through culture shedding and culture learning process; however, throughout intercultural interactions, this process can generate cultural clashes and acculturative stress. Berry (1997) reported that it is not rare to experience the acculturative stress at a moderate level of difficulty, and the sources of problems are not cultural but intercultural and seeded in the process of acculturation. He also stated that the experiences of the individuals of the non-dominant group could be similar to each other. He argued that studies of acculturation theory could offer an opportunity to concentrate on the issues arising in multicultural contexts where individuals, groups, and communities make psychological

and social adaptation by experiencing intercultural contact for a long time. He noted, moreover, that the host country's largely dominant or preferred cultural distinctions in language, values, beliefs, and traditions, often demand essential changes in the operation of the immigrant family unit through acculturation.

Berry's (1997) model of acculturation strategies suggests four categories: *integration*, *separation*, *assimilation* and *marginalisation*. In *integration*, immigrants adopt the aspects of the dominant culture while maintaining their culture of origin. In *separation*, immigrants hold on to their original culture and avoid interaction with the other cultures. The *assimilation* strategy emerges when immigrants let go of their original culture and, with daily interaction with the other culture, adopt the dominant one. The last strategy, *marginalisation*, occurs when there is a lack of possibility of cultural maintenance, and at the same time small interest in developing relations with other cultures. Ward and Masgoret (2008) conducted a survey on New Zealanders' attitude, and the objective of that survey was *to explore attitudes toward multiculturalism, immigrants, and immigration policy*. They found that New Zealanders were significantly more likely to expect integration as an acculturation strategy for immigrants than assimilation or separation.

Despite South Asian immigrants being one of the largest immigrant groups of this country, their acculturation process, especially their ways of teaching culture to their children in a new and unfamiliar environment, have not been significantly observed in studies. Stuart, Jose and Ward (2009) noted that to date few studies gave a picture of the acculturation experience of migrant families in a qualitative framework that allows parents' voices. Some studies have described the acculturating experiences of immigrants from South Asia. For instance, Ho, Au, Bedford and Cooper (2002) mention acculturation while discussing South Asian immigrants' mental health; Nisar (2013) mentions it in his study of immigrants' perceptions of the New Zealand police; Nayar (2009) mentions it while exploring the settlement experience in the occupational context of Indian migrant women. Stuart, Jose, Ward and Narayanan (2009, 2010) studied the acculturation process of parents and adolescent children of African, Asian and Middle Eastern migrant families in New Zealand. They indicated that parents and adolescents have dissimilar expectations in a number of important domains, such as privacy, trust and relationships, and they suggest the acculturation process might intensify intergenerational conflict. They also indicated that the normal child developmental process

also results in intergenerational conflict and the situation may become worse due to the acculturation process.

This review of the existing literature shows a research gap in the current field.

Bandyopadhyay, (2010), Ghosh and Leckie (2015), Leckie (2007), Voci and Leckie (2011), Gilbertson (2010) have reported settlement experiences of Indian migrants' in New Zealand. However, experiences of migrants from other South Asian countries have yet to be investigated in detail. In particular, there is a lack of research in the field of South Asian immigrant parents' processes of teaching culture to their children in the particular New Zealand context. Although various researchers in many countries have studied about South Asian immigrant parents' knowledge, culture, and processes of cultural transmission, there is a lack of narrative research conducted in this country's unique cultural context. My study is an attempt to fill this gap by exploring the immigrant parents' processes of teaching culture to develop their children's awareness of themselves as secure members of their own culture and/or as engaged citizens, long or short term, within a Treaty-based multicultural New Zealand society.



## Chapter Five: Baisakhi



*Baisakhi Narayanasyami is a mother of two children: Bhumi, a daughter aged ten, and Dhruvan, a son who will turn six soon. She lives in Christchurch. Baisakhi and her husband Jaishtha Narayanasyami are permanent residents and their children are citizens of New Zealand and the family have lived here for eleven years. The couple is originally from Tamil Nadu, India. They were medical practitioners at their home place and had respectable 'well paid' government jobs there. However, after migration Baisakhi had to undertake study for successive further degrees in order to keep their visa alive until they got permanent residency. Till then Jaishtha had to roll the economic wheel of the family. After completing her study, Baisakhi did not start a job until Dhruvan started primary school. The couple has now changed their roles in their family. Baisakhi is now working full time as a researcher and Jaishtha is now undertaking postgraduate studies in medicine in order to be able to return to his chosen career.*

### Living in a pendulum

I was born in Tamil Nadu, South India. We came to start our new life here in New Zealand in 2007. We started our journey to New Zealand just a week after we got married. The wedding henna was still on my hand and with my new husband I flew

away from my family, friends and my beloved homeland. It is difficult to find a perfect state of life. Here in New Zealand, we have everything but my soul is still in my village. It is like living in a pendulum.

Ours is an inter-caste marriage and my parents thought it would be good for us to live overseas, away from our relatives. Both sets of our parents had that wish. In my caste, we live in thirty-two villages. We must marry someone from those villages. I am probably the only one from that time who married outside her caste. This was a big deal! It took four years to get permission from our parents. Then my parents had to get permission from the relatives. We knew all of them who lived in those thirty-two villages. Most of them are our relatives. If I try to tell you the size of the thirty-two villages, it will be about five to six times the size of Christchurch. People from that caste won't be living elsewhere in India. They do go outside the region and work like us but still they consider their village as their home. It is like marrying an alien in our perspective if we marry someone from another caste. It was really hard for the family to accept.

Language comes in a package. By teaching the language to the children, they will learn many other things. I give a lot of importance to our language and I think in our part of India especially everyone does. Every language is special to its people but Tamil is a classical language. Perhaps because it has survived for more than three thousand years, it is so very precious to all the Tamil people all over the world, and I really want to teach the language to my daughter and son. I want them to learn it and communicate in it and pass it on to their children. Children at school think that they will never use their home language, that there is no use in knowing this language, especially while learning reading and writing. Sometimes I exaggerate to our daughter by saying that ours is the best language or that ours is the finest culture in the world to bring about a passion for her to learn it. I learned an easy way to teach the language by teaching the songs. I collected the Tamil songs from the web, sang them to my daughter, and played the tracks over and over to teach her the songs. Now Dhruvan is learning too. I read Tamil stories to them and make them dramatic.

Here you don't get any national holiday for celebrating our festivals or those of any minority festival. It is a challenge for us to make the time for celebrating but we try

our best to make it happen. In each festival, I give a great deal of effort so that my children can learn something out of the whole activity. So I try to celebrate exactly how my grandparents did in their time. In India, when I was young, my mom used to do all these rituals elaborately. But with time when we grew and had our own families, she skipped many things and now she does them in a short way. Even though I may not have the opportunity to celebrate these as elaborately in future, I try to do them perfectly now. I want to teach my children accurately. After my marriage, I used to have a journal to write the procedures step by step after double checking with my mom about everything. Now I do not need that; I can recall every step, it is all in my mind. Christchurch knows that Diwali is the biggest festival for Indians. We are also from India and Pongal is the biggest festival for every people from Tamil Nadu, India.

If someone is badly in need, and another person comes in and helps, then that helpful person is God. If I don't have food and eagerly need a job, and somebody out of the blue comes and give me a job he is God for me. So who is God is always changing for me. Even Hinduism supports this belief. That's why we have thousands of Gods. Everything that takes us towards life is God. If I am doing well for humanity then I am God! So it is very complicated to explain.

There is a very big list of differences in the values of my home country and New Zealand and I want my children to know our values. There is no *I* in my culture, it is all about *Us*. If a crow gets hurt, hundreds of crows will come and start making a noise, and try to help that wounded crow. This is the art of nature, this is the sense of community. But here I do not see the children are learning it from the school or from the wider community and I feel disappointed. We believe nothing is ours. Even at home, we are not allowed to say *my laptop, my room*. Everything around us should be shared. I feel this sense of community in Māori culture, but not in Kiwi.

Bhumi is growing in the context that is different from many values we preserve traditionally and I don't want her to be confused and disrespectful to either side. So, for instance, when we talk about clothes, I always tell her that this is how we and our family dress. It is our value. If somebody else is not following this value, they are not doing anything wrong. I keep an eye on Bhumi so that she doesn't hurt any other person's feelings. Or tell any other children something negative about their dress. So I

tell her that wearing clothes in that way is perfect for them, but it is not the way we and our family do it.

Equally, there are some things I want to avoid from my culture. Gender differences come first. I have gone through many difficulties in my life from childhood just because I am not male. I have experienced and learned gender disparity is a problem worldwide, not just in India. Anyway, I know, my daughter will lose various opportunities in the future just because she is not a male. I am trying to make the home environment equal so that at least at home she will be carefree and happy. At least at our home, she will not be judged based on her gender. I am doing it for my son as well. If I am treating both of them as equal, he will learn to respect girls and he will not feel superior just because he is a male. Secondly, I don't want to be a burden to my children in my old age. I want them to be happy and want to organise my retirement better so that I don't disturb them. Personally, I don't even want them to take care of me as other Indian families expect from their children. If they come and visit me once a month, that's enough for me.

Racism is not a word for only adults. Little children also demonstrate this pathetic attitude. Those little children in Bhumi's class told her that her colour is like a disease. One of them said, "My mum said I should not touch you. If I do, I will become like you! Stay away! We are not playing with you." I couldn't believe it, but I found that what Bhumi said was true. It happened again and again. I have seen them bullying my daughter with my own eyes. Several times we made complaints to the school but the school totally denied these racist acts. They did not take it seriously and did not take any action to solve this problem. When she started her Primary School she was just like another child from New Zealand, she only carried a brown skin. She was only five years old and those incidents made her terribly sad.

I complained to the teacher but the teacher took the part of the other children and tried to convince me that those kids were also five to six years old and it was not much more than child's play. One day they pushed Bhumi from the top of the slide because they did not want her to play in the same place where they were playing. Bhumi got a big cut in her lip that needed surgery. She was deeply distressed and after that whenever she went to school, she started to cry a lot. Because we did not get any

positive support from the school we took the decision to change school. In the new school, it started to happen again. Bhumi was already depressed from the previous school's experience and again she got bullied in the new school. Again the reason was her skin colour. A girl in my daughter's class bullied her and trimmed the front of her hair. She told Bhumi that she was ugly and the haircut could not make her uglier! So I changed Bhumi's class. But all of these changes in schools and classes were not the solution! After changing the class we started to develop ourselves to protect her.

My cousin is a psychological counsellor, and we took guidance from her to overcome this problem. I also learnt many things from the web. I started to make video clips of Bhumi's activities and shared them in social media. Bhumi noticed that so many people around the world liked her and gave good comments on her activities.

At first, making all those videos was our strategy to distract Bhumi from her sadness. Eventually, she started to feel like a star and got her confidence back! I continued making the videos as long as she wanted. Nowadays she spends more time on academic study, sports and music so we do not make many videos like before.

I realised that we needed to stop running away from troubles; we needed to stop moving. I and my husband understood that we might not get better circumstances. Rather we had to grow the strength in ourselves to avoid any further moving. I planned steps to come out from that drowning position.

I made friendships with the parents of her classmates. Whether I liked them or not, I developed a relationship with them, arranged playdates and broke the distance. Now I am one of the boards of trustees in that school. Now I have people in the school community who will stand beside me if something happens. Now I made myself so very active that when I say something, they hear it, I don't need to shout silently anymore!

Racism is not a list of acts that need to be altered. It is the attitude of people. It will take many more years for Kiwis to accept all cultures.

I know it is possible to teach and use more than one language as the medium of instruction in school. I have had that experience. In our childhood in India, we have

learned at least two languages. Many other schools taught more than two. In this global world, it is very difficult to keep and sustain a language if it is not academically transmitted. It is a major lacking that schools are not teaching Māori language to the children. I really want my children to learn the Māori language from their school. Because it is their cultural identity as well. To have the identity of a New Zealander, learning the indigenous language is necessary. I often teach them some of the words I learn from the Māori channel. They also learn some words from school as well. But this small amount of vocabulary is not enough to keep the language alive in them. Honestly, schools need to put more effort into it.

When I first came into this land, I did not feel that it is a bicultural country. It was more an English country, and in Christchurch it still is. But I think it should not be felt to this way. In a decade I have experienced that the country is trying to move forward and minimise the gap. I am still not sure to what extent the bicultural relationship and the Treaty partnership is present in our context but I want to show appreciation to the people who are trying to come forward. In some countries, people just ignore the indigenous culture. They never recognise its importance. But New Zealand is not doing that. It is excellent that this country recognises the rights of its indigenous people.

Children from different cultures in school get information from their friends, and sometimes they develop misconceptions about South Asians. Understanding of sensitive social issues should come from school, and then the chance of facing uncomfortable situations between people of different cultures may be reduced, inside and outside the school. They should know more about us than only our clothes, food, mehndi and songs. I am not saying that these are not representing our culture. We have many things to offer beyond those four or five marketed cultural elements. I mean culture does not stop in clothing, mehndi, food and Bollywood songs. Everyone's thoughts and perspectives are influenced by their culture. And to accept people from other cultures we need more understanding of their culture.

### Committed to both worlds

Baisakhi talks about her migration in terms of “living in a pendulum”. She is pulled back to her roots in her native community and she wants to be actively involved in the land she has migrated into. She always wants to teach her children how to be true to and live in both these worlds. Throughout our discussion, she talks about the various aspects of what it means to her to bring up her children to fully embrace both the culture of their family origin and that of New Zealand.

She begins by talking about her reasons for coming to New Zealand, of her desire to escape from becoming a social outcast. During the growth of their romantic relationship, Baisakhi and Jaishtha faced many challenges because of belonging to different castes. Baisakhi reports that after a long time of working to convince both sets of their parents they won the battle and got married in 2007. She confesses that mainly to avoid social criticism, they then flew to New Zealand with a very limited idea about this foreign land. In the Hindu religious majority context of South India, inter-caste marriage is not readily accepted. Rukmini (2014), Mazumdar (2014) and Pandey (2015) reported that only 5% of marriages are inter-caste in the whole of India and suggest that the scenario is altering with time, but still many parts of society see such moves as a stigma and taboo. When asked about whether caste differences affect them in any way in their interactions with the Tamil community in Christchurch, Baisakhi replies, “No, from our experience, the caste system has power only within India. When people come out from that context, they do not care about the castes.” However, she acknowledges that she has experienced judgmental opinions by the community about the fact that hers was a love-marriage. She explains that she has had to deal with criticism from those who have had arranged marriages and so seemed to position themselves as socially superior to Baisakhi because she broke the social norms by entering into a love marriage.

Baisakhi admits that New Zealand came as a cultural shock to her after growing up in what was a much protected social background. As time passed she started to understand the different contextual culture. Like many other people of her caste, she still feels her *home* is the village of her birth. She confesses it is heart wrenching for her not to live in her village and not see her children grow in that context, but she affirms she is doing it for the well-being of her family and for offering her children more opportunities in life. She states that sometimes she feels like standing on two boats that are going in two different directions. Later she says she is ‘*living in a pendulum*’. She explains that she has gradually embraced her identity as a New Zealander

and is motivated to support her children in learning about the cultures of the country where they born as well as the cultures of the place where their parents brought them.

By her native culture, she identifies the culture and expectations of her village and family. She explains that in India cultural expectations are significantly different “for people from different regions, castes, states and religions”. Hence for Baisakhi, her native culture is what she has learned from her extended family in her village who belong to the same caste. However, she explains that by tradition the family is expected to follow the husband’s caste’s customs. She explains she has been performing all the customs that belong to both her caste and that of Jaishtha. She feels lucky that most of those customs are the same. She takes it as her major responsibility to her children to pass on the native culture as accurately as she knows how to.

### **Language is the glue for every aspect of culture**

Baisakhi explains that her first priority in passing on her Tamil culture to her children is language. She stresses the importance of the language and states that if one can pass on the language that will automatically transmit many other aspects of culture with it. Therefore, Baisakhi is treating the Tamil language as the base to teach the other aspects of her native culture to her children, so providing an invisible glue to various aspects of Tamil culture. Tamil is Baisakhi’s state’s official language but, as she stated, not widely spoken throughout India. She has a very strong commitment to teaching the language. “Not only because it is our mother tongue,” she says, “but also it is one of the oldest languages of the world and we hold great respect for this language.” Tamil is a classical language and has been accepted as one of the longest surviving languages of the world (Steever, 2018; Stein, 1977). This Dravidian language has been historically honoured as *The Tamil Mother* and it is acknowledged as the centre of all attention of Tamil culture (Ramaswamy, 1997; Ramaswamy, 1998). Hence Baisakhi makes great effort to transmit the language appropriately.

She reports that her children did not go to any language teaching institute, but that instead she seriously concentrated on teaching Tamil to both of her children from their birth. She talks about the strategies she has used to teach them the spoken language, besides communicating with them in Tamil and ensuring they had correct pronunciation. Teaching songs is one strategy. She suggests that Bhumi did not initially realise that the purpose is to teach her Tamil; she just engages with the singing. “In this way,” Baisakhi relates, “Bhumi is learning



the language, improving her pronunciation and at the same time developing her sense of Tamil music. Now Bhumi is quite fluent. Dhruvan also is walking on the same path.”

Another strategy, she relates, is storytelling. She explains that Bhumi loves listening to interesting stories, and she consistently uses this process to teach Bhumi reading and writing. She brought some interesting and attractively illustrated Tamil story books from India and she describes how she adds an engaging and dramatic reading style to the books. She adds that after building a regular story time, she stopped reading to Bhumi and motivated her to learn to read other books by herself. She reports that Bhumi was so passionate about those stories that she started to enjoy learning to read them. Now she can read and write in Tamil. Baisakhi reports that Dhruvan copies his sister and just started to grow his interest in learning more Tamil language; she is hopeful that eventually, she will be able to teach Dhruvan as well.

Baisakhi recognises herself a successful parent in transmitting the Tamil language appropriately by teaching Bhumi speaking, reading and writing language skills. “Not all migrant parents can succeed in transmitting their language,” she says, “but I am lucky that I succeed. Immigrant parents often face a very difficult situation in teaching their native language abroad”. She explains that children learn their reading and writing skills mostly from school. The challenge for migrants is a worldwide one. In most English-speaking countries children from non-English speaking families mostly do not learn anything about their native language from the schools since the curriculum is developed mainly in the official language of the host country. Similarly, the French curriculum gives the French language absolute priority and migrant students are not expected to use their native language at school (Helot & Young, 2002). Living in Christchurch Baisakhi’s children also face similar expectations for using English and occasionally Māori language in school. For this reason, Baisakhi always tries to tell her children how beautiful the language is, how it is so precious to them and to the world, and how rich the literature is.

### **Festivals of thanksgiving and the core values of the rituals**

Leaving the majority status of religious affiliation at home and receiving a minority status in the host countries is a significant, but often disregarded factor in understanding migrants’ sense of identity (Yang, & Ebaugh, 2001). Most migrant families struggle to celebrate festivals. For instance, my own experience affirms research (Nielsen, Akgönül, Alibašić, &

Racius, 2014) that despite the fact that Islam is the religion that has the second highest number of adherents, Muslim citizens and migrants in most European countries do not have any public holiday on the day of their major celebrations. Therefore all festivals are mainly celebrated in the isolated environment of homes. So it is for Baisakhi in New Zealand. The festivals have connections with her religious practice, but she also recognises them as the cultural customs from her village. She describes different customs of various festivals her family celebrates over the year. Almost every month they celebrate different kinds of thanksgivings. Baisakhi states that sometimes she even gives more attention to these practices than her sister who is living in India. For instance, they have a day of thanksgiving for all the non-living things and they do various kinds of rituals to thank all of them. She explains the custom, “Everything which is helpful for humans to live an everyday life we show our gratitude to them, clean them on that day and pray. We also thank and worship our books which give us knowledge and wisdom. I ask my children to bring their books and I do the rituals in front of them”. Baisakhi is not only doing these activities for celebrating the festival but also she is teaching children the value of respecting the non-living things; she is training them to take care of their usable goods. They need to adore their books, especially on that day because books give them wisdom and knowledge, and open the door to learn everything. Teaching about this value is Baisakhi’s main objective through the festival named *Ayudha Pooja*.

In every festival, Baisakhi and Bhumi do *rangoli*, the coloured floor sand designs, *henna*, hand paintings, and many kinds of traditional hairstyles. One of the biggest festivals Baisakhi’s family celebrates in every January is the four-day long harvest festival of *Pongal*<sup>18</sup> (Biswas, 2016). Baisakhi and her family celebrate Pongal to give thanks to all natural powers such as “water, sun, and fire - because we get food with the support of all these natural powers”. Two years ago Dhruvan did the rituals the first time along with his sister. In one of our discussions, Baisakhi shows me the video clip she made on that day. Both of the children are standing in front of the stove, waiting eagerly, looking towards the pot of rice on the stove with their joined hand, happily rhyming the chants “Pongal o...Pongal”; waiting for the rice to touch the highest point of boiling and rise up; eagerly waiting to get the beautiful aroma of the freshly boiled rice.

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<sup>18</sup> Tamil word meaning *to boil*

The family also celebrates Christmas at their home. Baisakhi relates that she started to celebrate it to make Bhumi happy. Hindu religion allows the celebrations of other religious festivals too. So she never feels she betrays her religious identity by celebrating any festival other than her own traditional ones. For the last five Christmases, they have been decorating the Christmas tree and giving presents to the children. In 2014, Baisakhi's parents came in Christchurch to visit them. They kept all of their presents for Bhumi till Christmas Eve, and she got a big surprise at that time. Bhumi loves singing carols at school. It makes her happy to celebrate Christmas as her other school friends celebrate it.

The response I got from Bhumi about transmitting her religious belief was unexpected. She is a believer; she loves her traditions, customs and always tries to transmit them to her children. But she doesn't want her children to take their religious automatically from the family. Her understanding of God is wide and she believes God is not as a single character or a supernatural figure.

### **Belief in the existence of God without forcing belief in her children**

From Baisakhi's viewpoint, her children are still too young to understand and learn such a big subject as religion. If Bhumi and Dhruvan want to be believers, she says, with time they will search for their religion. She reports that she and Jaishtha have agreed to this decision. She explains this decision developed from her childhood experience. She shares that her mother is a religious person but her father does not believe in God. Both of them did not try to impose their beliefs on Baisakhi and her siblings. Baisakhi is now applying the same practice with her children: Bhumi and Dhruvan are free to choose to believe or not to believe in God. Baisakhi states her children are learning to practice humanity and to respect nature from their mother rather the practice of Hinduism.

When asked her about how she would feel if Bhumi chose to marry a person who belongs to any other religion, she replies, "If that person doesn't want to change Bhumi's belief then I have no problem. If he is from here, a white Kiwi or a Māori person or an immigrant I don't have any problem. My prayer is to keep their own belief and live their life happily". Despite not being about rigid about religious belief, Baisakhi is very respectful to her own religion: she acknowledges that she and Jaishtha would be very unhappy if their children ever formally changed their religion. She explains, "Hindus are born as a Hindu and die as a Hindu. We

don't need any priest or any person to preach it to us. So if they do not want to believe in God I don't mind, they will still be Hindu". She adds that while all the *pujas*<sup>19</sup> that she does at home are to make the children learn cultural festivals and the customs, they are mostly related to her religion. So they are getting knowledge about religious practices in this way.

### Differences in Values and Manners

Baisakhi repeatedly expresses that she has found many aspects of humanitarian and social values in New Zealand which are significantly different from Indian ones. She says that in some cases she wants to transmit the ones she got from her culture of origin, and in some other context she prefers the new ways.

When asked how she is defining *Kiwiness*, she explains, "When I say Kiwiness, I see Pākehā in my mind rather than the Māori, Kiwis are the whites here." Baisakhi also states, "Like the cultures of different states in India are so different from each other, here in Christchurch, the Kiwis grow in their own way of living which is different from the Māori." She acknowledges that she has found it easier to understand and receive in her life whatever she had experienced so far of the Māori culture, compared to the dominant Pākehā culture.

Baisakhi explains that she sees the Kiwis as more inclined towards individual ways of living and that the Pākehā culture is more self-absorbed. Baisakhi explains, "They think about their own wellness rather than others in the community. They grow up living a self-centered life. Most of them pay their money to charity and I am not talking about whether they are selfish in a sense of money or wealth! It is just in their nature to give priority to individuality rather to the community." When asked to elaborate, she says, "Suppose, if I am having some problem, it is hard for them to really be sad or involved. In our culture, we have to care for others, cry for others, should not say *no* to others."

Baisakhi criticises the individualistic attitude Bhumi is learning from school and gives an example, "The worst thing Bhumi has learned in school is the phrase *none of your business*. Teachers, students, everyone uses this phrase! I have heard them use this phrase continuously. The school environment is socialising the children not to be involved with other people's life. Isn't it wrong? Aren't we supposed to be involved and help others?" Baisakhi expects the school to teach the children to be there for others in need, and they

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<sup>19</sup> Acts of reverence

should help each other with moral and mental support. She continues, “To them, *us* means the child and the parents, a couple, a nuclear family, maximum two or three generations of connection. From our cultures, *us* means the whole village, the whole state, the whole country. If I know you, see you every day, talk to you every day, then you are my business. I think Kiwis do not understand this concept. I really do not want Bhumi or Dhruvan to pick that culture.” Baisakhi shares her fear that there is a survival instinct in New Zealand society and to grow here, her children are expected to learn to build an individualistic attitude to life. As she says, her native culture has taught her that it is not right to own anything in this world. Her description of the ways she teaches her children to celebrate and honour non-living things as well as living ones is a strong indicator of how important the notion of non-ownership is in her life. As shown in other chapters, Baisakhi’s attitude is not necessarily one shared by all South Asians: it is, however, an essential part of the ways she views the world.

### **Standards of showing respect**

Baisakhi talks about the different standards between the cultures in relation to manners, showing respect to others and expressing opinions. She offers an example, “Our culture does not allow us to show the skin or to wear the clothes which will show some part of the body. We traditionally try to cover our whole body except the face, hands and feet. I try to explain this difference to my daughter. I want her to understand our value and receive it.” She shares that because of these differences, Bhumi who loves her mother’s way of dressing, started to think that the way others dressed was inappropriate. Baisakhi tells of her concern that while Bhumi should be respectful to her ancestors’ values, she should not become disrespectful to others. She recounts how she corrected her, saying, “This is how the people here have been living for generations and this is their culture, this is not wrong. There is nothing wrong with showing your skin. But to us, this is not our culture. We should respect and follow our culture in our life.”

Baisakhi explains that her culture forbids touching anything especially any books and other materials related to study or any person with a foot, but she found this understanding is not the same in Christchurch. She shares another experience of dissimilar values: ways of showing respect to elders. In her native context, if any elder is standing at home, on a bus or in any place, younger persons should stand as well and they are supposed to give the elder space for sitting. Sitting in front of parents, parents-in-law, grandparents or any elder person

while they are standing is not a respectful behaviour. “This is a very basic value that we all grew up with in India,” she says. “Here people do not bother much with these values. They have a very different culture. I am not saying which is good or bad, but different. I am not very strict with my children following our traditions exactly but they need to know them thoroughly.” She admits the teaching of her traditional values is a strong pressure in her parenting, saying, “If they do not know these little things, they will not be able to understand their root cultural circumstances. I have a huge extended family back home in India. And I don’t want any of them to be get offended with how my children act whenever I go back to visit them.” Baisakhi admits to using every bit of her mother-daughter time to teach the values of their culture of origin to Bhumi and reflects that Dhruvan is still too young to talk about these matters.

### **Getting out from under gender disparity**

Baisakhi shares that there are some cultural aspects of her village culture those she never wants to transmit to her children. She strongly states that the one she most wants to bypass is male domination. Although she acknowledges that it is present in some way in every place in the whole world, she recounts she experienced it in a severe manner in the place where she grew up. In her life experience, males are dominant and female are dominated in Tamil culture. She gives the example that at her sister’s family her brother-in-law does not do any household work. Her sister is a doctor and she lives very near the hospital where she works. Every day she has to come back home at lunchtime to cook food for the family and then she goes back to work. The men in her family, or in other families in Baisakhi’s village, never come into the kitchen. Baisakhi states confidently, “I don’t want that to happen in my children’s family. I am teaching both of my children to cook and to do the household jobs equally. Dhruvan does not get any favour for being a boy from me and Jaishtha”

Baisakhi shares that male privilege is very common in patriarchal Tamil society, and in her village community: every mother teaches the daughters this practice. When Baisakhi was young her mother used to tell her that she and her sisters should do all the household works and her brother should not do any. “Even for foods, people show a disparity between girls and boys,” she says, and affirms that throughout her life she has committed to never teach that to her children: she strictly wants to maintain gender equity in her family. She reflects that she may be the first person who is changing these trends in her extended family. She

shares that so far she has kept the gender traditions in her family as a secret from her daughter. If her children know about it, she says, they may feel upset about the mentality of their community or may disrespect the people who are practising the tradition. She shares, “My mother-in-law doesn't adore a girl child. She tried to show some discrimination when my boy was born. We took it very seriously and warned her to stop. She may not change from inside but she understood our firmness, so she tries to hide her attitude. But my daughter understands that her grandma doesn't like girls. When she asked us about the reason we did not tell her the details about our past culture but said it is just her grandma's choice. Maybe we will disclose the situation one day when she will be mature enough to realise the cultural differences and not feel inferior. She is still young to understand those things.”

Baisakhi shares her own unpleasant experiences as a girl child. She is the third daughter in her family. Since girl children are commonly unwanted in that context, when she was born many of her relatives suggested to her mother to stop feeding her milk so that she might starve or face malnutrition and may eventually die. It is a horrible truth for Baisakhi that her parents had to stay away from their family for one year to save her. She heard this story from her extended family and also from her parents, grew up in the same discriminating surroundings, and learned to live a life with a double standard. When she got the opportunity to come out from her village and have a separate identity, she was determined to stop discrimination at least in her own family. Since her son is still very young, she says is not yet able to assess Dhruvan's feeling about this issue. Even if Dhruvan is given favouritism from his grandparents, she says, he does not yet have the maturity to notice it.

### **Independent old age**

Baisakhi says about another tradition she seeks to avoid is not being independent in old age. In her native society, children have to take care of parents. It is one of the obligations and every parent starts to expect this from their children when getting old. She states, “It is a very common culture all over India and if anyone doesn't do it he or she will be regarded as a bad human being, people will start cursing them and they will get pressured by the community, Not caring for parents is a socio-cultural taboo. It is the government's Hindu law. Even in the movies it is not easily accepted! I want to make it clear that I am not saying that taking care of parents and elderly people is a bad idea. But for me, I do not want to be so dependent on my children.”

When asked why she perceives it differently, she explains that perhaps she embraced this point of view gradually after coming to Christchurch. For the first time, she experienced that many elderly people were living independently. Initially, it was a culture shock for her. However, with time, she started to admire the practice. She says, “In Christchurch and in many other places in the western world elderly people are self-dependent. They still love their children, and the children also love them. But both parties have the freedom to make their choice and live their life in their own way. When I was in India I also couldn’t think of accepting this western culture. I thought it is not a good culture and I would never let it happened in my life. But when I observed people here closely, my perspective had changed. I don’t want to be a burden to my children, I want them to be happy and I want to plan my retirement well.”

At the same time as Baisakhi seeks to pass on her cultural values to her children, she also adopts what were once *foreign* beliefs and that she has grown to appreciate since migration. Choosing which values to preserve from both her old and new cultures is part of the pendulum that she says she lives in. She explains that her choices are driven not only by the need for her family to adapt to their new context but also because of the need to continuously seek how to develop as optimal social beings.

### **Forces in school that make cultural transmission difficult**

Baisakhi talks about the negative experiences her daughter had at school. She reports that Bhumi did not like eating sandwiches and so she would make Indian style foods such as biryani, chapatti, curry, Indian pasta for her lunch at school. Other children teased Bhumi, saying that the foods had a bad smell. So now, whether she likes them or not, Bhumi wants to take the kinds of foods which other children have, such as sandwiches, and fruits. Baisakhi reflects that it was the beginning of unwanted changes in Bhumi’s life. Like the changes in the school lunch box, the family felt the need to change many other things in their daily lives to fit into the host country.

Baisakhi talks about memories that are clearly not pleasant. “It was a period of misery for all of us,” she says, slowly. “My daughter faced troubles. I am talking about bullying based on race. Racism can be done by any age group, truly! A bunch of children bullied her a lot because of her colour.” Baisakhi recounts how she complained to the teacher who tended to dismiss the taunts as a child’s play, how the teasing escalated into physical bullying and how



she changed her daughter's school. She recounts how the racial bullying continued in the new school. "Racism is not isolated to one school in Christchurch," she says, "but it is a prevalent worldview learned by New Zealand children at an early age."

Baisakhi talks about how she realised her family had to stop running and how she found strategies to build Bhumi's confidence and how she decided to take a more active role herself in the school. She reflects that Bhumi still faces similar difficulties. "She is becoming strong enough to face and ignore them and knows that the bad words she hears about herself from other children are not factual. She is now confident enough to protect herself." Baisakhi adds that now the school comes out and supports the family when negative situations arise. She says, "Last year when Bhumi was bullied at school in a racist way we made a complaint and the principal was very angry. He made the student write a letter to Bhumi and one letter to me. He also arranged a meeting with the bully's parent, and he made him apologise in person. He banned the boy from the school playground for one year." Baisakhi affirms that she appreciates the changes in the school, but also suggests there is still a lot of room for further development in this area.

Baisakhi emphasises the need for schools to educate children to prevent racist events from happening. She says, "When it happens they use us to educate those children who bullied. It is not fair. My daughter or any other child should not be used as an educational material! You need to prepare your own material to prevent bullying."

She highlights that racism is not seeded only inside the children's mind; her family has experienced it from some teachers as well. They changed schools, but found changing is not always the best solution. She reflects how hard it is to make teachers understand the harm in small unthinking acts they did to the children. She also reflects that teachers are respected employees of a school and sometimes it is difficult to prove this sort of attitude to the authority. She says, "We can easily complain when kids bully based on racism; but how to complain about the teachers? There are some horrible teachers obviously and they secretly bully kids just because of their race but it is very hard to prove the fact to management. Believe me, it is very hard, we just have to live with it." She also acknowledges, "There are amazing teachers who accept all cultures into their classroom." The various participants in this study report differing experiences and perceptions of racism in their children's schooling. What is important in Baisakhi's account is that she and her family feel racism in the incidents

that she reports and that they suffer because of it. The implications are further discussed below.

### Changing physical appearance

Baisakhi shares another example of undesirable alteration to her social identity. For her, it is very traditional and even mandatory to wear a *bindi*<sup>20</sup>. It has been described as a sacred and compulsory everyday dress element, especially for married women (Antony, 2010). Baisakhi relates that Bhumi also loves wearing a bindi, but that both had to stop wearing them because of uncomfortable questions from other people. Baisakhi explains, “I feel that I can only look good with a bindi. It’s a part of me. But whenever Bhumi or I wear it, everyone starts staring and asking questions or giving uncomfortable comments”. She reports that they even received comments like *bindi is annoying* and *it is weird and disturbing*. These situations were disturbing especially for Bhumi, and Baisakhi felt embarrassed by them. She shares an experience, “One day a girl wearing a short skirt made a comment about bindi saying that it is irritating for her. Usually, I don’t reply to these kinds of comments. I tried to ignore it and leave the place quickly. But another girl interfered and said *Your short skirt is annoying for us*. Then both of the girls started quarrelling. It was awkward and embarrassing for me and Bhumi. Now we stopped wearing a bindi. Without it, I feel incomplete. But if I wear it, every day I will go through similar situations. But not wearing it makes me feel sad. When I do not wear a bindi, I cannot recognise myself in the mirror. I feel like I am sick or having a fever.”

Arguably, wearing a bindi has different values in life for people from different cultures, but to Baisakhi, it was a matter of self-recognition and self-identity. To her, it does not only give a pleasant look but it also makes her confident and proud of her cultural identity (Antony, 2010). Baisakhi’s position resonates with Taylor’s (1994) words, “...a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (p. 25). Little adjustments like dropping the bindi from the forehead or changing foods in the lunch box perhaps make migrant families’ social life easier in the social context, but they are sucking the pride from their cultural uniqueness and to some extent seeding a sense of oppression in their personality. It is an oppressive form of affective learning which crushes peoples’ rights to *feel* their identity. When I look onto Europe’s problems with hijab and niqab that mostly

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<sup>20</sup> A dot between the eyebrows commonly worn by South Asian women. Also known as *Tip*, *Tika*.

developed after September 11, I speculate that these are creating a comparable, but stronger, impression on Muslim migrants of being oppressed. In the early 1990s, the French Council of State believed that involuntary removal of hijab was a violation of human rights and it was also viewed it as an abuse of personal and religious freedom (Byng, 2010). But after 2004, French public school students and state employees are legally restricted from wearing hijab, yarmulkes (Jewish skullcaps), and large Christian crosses in the public sphere to protect the state's ideal of *laïcité* or secularism (Shadid and Van Koningsveld, 2005). Hijab is banned for state employees in eight out of sixteen states of Germany ("The Islamic veil across Europe", 2018). Wearing niqab<sup>21</sup> publicly is legally forbidden in Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium as well as in Britain where there was a politicised argument on the appropriateness of wearing the niqab in public (Byng, 2010). All of these legislative actions have added to migrant families' crises of identity and to the complexity of navigating multicultural societies.

### **Learning about New Zealand's twofold culture**

Baisakhi talks about her understanding of biculturalism in New Zealand's context and how the school is providing opportunities to learn about it. She reports that she came to this country with a mind like a blank slate about the cultural context. Because she studied at a university her knowledge about New Zealand's bicultural heritage gradually developed. She reports how she tries to transmit her knowledge about New Zealand's cultural expectations to Bhumi. She admits that schools endorse the indigenous culture with respect and pass aspects of the culture to students in their overall teaching process. However, she is concerned about most schools' low involvement in promoting Māori language. She reports that at the pre-school level, teachers do a lot of activities that include Māori culture and language, such as frequently using rhymes and songs that use both languages. On the other hand, she says, from primary school onwards every activity is more focussed on the English language. As a New Zealander, Baisakhi expects that Bhumi should learn both Māori and English languages. She acknowledges that there are many outside tutors and organisations that teach Māori language, but the state schools her children are studying in have not provided learning facilities so that children can be able to practically use Māori language. Baisakhi argues that in an officially bicultural country, the language should be mandatory at all levels of education and work. She reflects, "There are Māori schools here and in the general schools they have some topics

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<sup>21</sup> A veil veering the face

related to New Zealand history and Māori culture. But nothing is in the general schools to teach the language.” Baisakhi's observations resonate with the frustration of many Māori educators (including Smith, 2017; Skerrett, 2017) who assert the need for more proactive commitment to Māori language maintenance. In the European context, it is also a significant area of concern to sustain minority languages. For instance, in mainstream Irish schools’ English medium teaching has been pointed to as one of the reasons for decreasing of Irish language usage in the population (Hindley, 1991).

Baisakhi offers a contrasting example from her own country. India has many different cultural identities in its different states. People are learning their own language as well as the English language simultaneously. The schools teach both languages. She thinks that as Māori is also New Zealand’s official language, the schools should mandatorily teach both languages here. She admits that the schools here understand and respect the Māori culture but they fall short in transmitting the language. She says, “It is a major lack here. You can find a Māori child is speaking in both of the languages. But you will hardly find it in the non-Māori children. In this global world, it is very difficult to keep and sustain a language if it is not academically transmitted.” Baisakhi affirms that she gives her support to this learning in every way that she can. For instance, she has taught Bhumi how to greet in a Māori traditional way by doing a *hongi*<sup>22</sup> besides teaching her own cultural traditional greetings. She took a photo of her doing a hongi with her daughter to show her daughter that it is beautiful and respectful.

Baisakhi recounts another experience. Bhumi’s school once prepared the *hāngī*<sup>23</sup>, she says, for the students and their family. It was optional for the students but Baisakhi along with her family went to the school to participate and experience the process. They all ate the served *hāngī*. Baisakhi acknowledges that only teaching hongi or tasting *hāngī* is not an absolute way of teaching an indigenous culture but she stresses that she is trying to support her children to fit into the culture of New Zealand.

### School and multiculturalism

Baisakhi talks about initiatives that Bhumi’s school takes to promote multicultural inclusion in school. The school has a yearly cultural week. In that week they have a cultural dress-up,

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<sup>22</sup> A pressing together of noses to share the breath of life

<sup>23</sup> A traditional Māori way of cooking in an earth oven

cultural performances, different kinds of assignments or projects for the children, and sharing of cultural food. Every Friday, the school invites parents to cook in the kitchen. Parents from different countries come and cook different cultural foods in front of the elder children to teach them. One time Bhumi was offered the chance to dance the Indian traditional dance, Bharatanatyam in the cultural week. Other children performed Chinese, Irish and Korean dances. Bhumi was beautifully dressed in a Bharatanatyam costume. Her teachers took photos and put a large printed copy on her class wall. The photo was in the classroom for the whole year and Bhumi felt very special.

Baisakhi shares a significant experience. She had visited India with her family and her parents had arranged a very big function for the head shaving of Dhruvan and ear-piercing for both children. It was an important occasion for the family. Baisakhi made a video clip with all the photos and videos from the India visit and took it to Bhumi's school. At first, she had thought the school authority would reject showing the video clip to other children, but to her surprise, they showed the video to all the classes and asked all the children to write a story from the video. The teachers collected the stories and presented them to Baisakhi as a book. She says, "This experience inspired me a lot. This year we are going to visit India again. I will surely prepare something special for the school."

However, Baisakhi also stresses the importance of the changes schools need to make in their multicultural activities. At present, she says, Indian culture is only represented by bright colours, spicy foods, mehndi<sup>24</sup> art, and Bollywood songs. Moreover, she says, activities are mostly dependent on the teacher. One teacher may promote diverse cultural activities and so inspires the children. Another teacher might not want involvement and focus only on academic activities. Baisakhi highlights these variations in school-to-school practice and suggests the need for a workable plan for all the schools to make them more inclusive. If multicultural practices would strategically be applied and included in every school's curriculum, she says, all students could have similar and cooperative understandings about diverse cultures. And that, she says, would support both migrant and non-migrant students in understanding each other.

Baisakhi also urges that the school authority should review cultural activities every year and update their choices with students' age. Cultural studies, she says, should have a chronological development like other school subjects, such as maths, science and arts. She

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<sup>24</sup> Body art using henna

suggests, “With respect to age the school can include our wedding culture, our family culture. Why most of the Indian parents do not want their children to date! There is a cultural reason for that. And if students know that from their school, they will not disrespect different values. It is just an example for the teachers to think more about our cultural complexities.”

### **Teasing out key threads**

While Baisakhi’s story is a particular narrative of a migrant parent in a New Zealand context it raises some issues that are possibly relevant for migrants in many countries. The first point highlighted by this story is that the home culture feels precious to migrants who have been separated from it. Even though Baisakhi eagerly came to New Zealand to escape some of the stigmas she might have experienced at home, she was not at all willing to give up the aspects of her culture that expressed her identity and her relationship with the world. Similarly, refugee migrants come to Europe and other parts of the world to escape war or prosecution and they are grateful for asylum, but because of their separation, they often cling all the more strongly to their native culture. Baisakhi found ways of passing that culture to her children. In the most recent school that her children attend the school also celebrates their cultural identity. Her story highlights that there is an alternative to the ghetto-isation of migrant groups. If it is possible for migrants to pass on their culture to their children with the support of their school and community, there is probably less likelihood of them retreating into ghettos where they feel alienated from the mainstream community in their new country.

The second point that arises from Baisakhi’s story is that she wanted to learn about the interweaving cultures of the country she has adopted. She wanted her children to learn Māori as well as English. But she reported that she had to find out about the bicultural nature of New Zealand mostly on her own. This experience highlights the need for countries to offer good learning opportunities for migrants to learn about the intricate cultures of the countries they have come into. All too often migrants are left to find their own way into the culture of their new country and are blamed for not respecting it.

The third issue to be examined is that Baisakhi’s daughter experienced racism in her school, even though the adults at the school saw the children’s behaviour as innocent because of their youth. The point that is important is that Bhumi experienced the pain and isolation of being racially tagged. This highlights that the experience of racism is often very different from the

perspective of the victim and from that of mainstream society. And it is the experience of the victim that creates resentments and perpetuates social divisions.

The fourth point involves Baisakhi and her daughter's attachment to the bindi. For them, it is perfectly natural and normal. For some members of the wider community, it is a deliberative marking of difference. So when countries legislate against marks of cultural identity such as the hijab and niqab, they need to be aware that some migrants feel this is a destruction of part of their identity. However, there is a need for careful negotiation with migrant communities of these measures and the values attached to them, and to elicit their collaboration in making decisions.

Baisakhi's narrative also suggests specific recommendations for schooling, such as development of ways to look beyond the surface in exploring culture and ways of recognising the pain monocultural assumptions, by children as well adults can cause.

## Chapter Six: Ashari



*Ashari Fernando is fifty-six years old and originally from Sri Lanka. She is now a New Zealand citizen. With a bachelor degree in education, she has been working full time at a preschool. Her husband, fifty-eight years old Srabon Fernando, is also from Sri Lanka and works in leather production. He is also a New Zealand citizen. Both of them are Roman Catholics. They have three daughters, Rosy, Lily and Mary. The eldest one is twenty-three years old, a M.Sc. student of Microbiology at one of the Universities in Christchurch. The second daughter is twenty years old, living in Dunedin and studying dentistry. The youngest one is sixteen years old, a Year Twelve student at a Catholic college in Christchurch.*

### A merged identity: A story of adjustment and separations

It has been a roller coaster journey to bring up my three daughters abroad. Every child is different. You cannot apply the same parenting style to teach the things you want to teach to each of your children. But the key point is being able to talk with them. I talk to my daughters a lot! And the more I talk, the more my parenting becomes easier. It could be about marriage, education or anything. I made sure I had



time to spend with them: I would gossip with my girls for hours. To me, their outside world is like a book where every day they add a new page.

The identity we preserve is neither a hundred per cent Kiwi nor a hundred per cent Sri Lankan. We have developed our own ways of doing everything. It is important to keep our individual identity as migrants. How we negotiate our native culture in our current life is very important. To us, first comes family values, then language and then other aspects. And of course, religion is like the backbone to everything. These are the things I want to sustain in my children as much as possible.

We cannot take everything from the culture of New Zealand. My children's friends had boyfriends from twelve or thirteen. I never accepted this for my kids and I explained the reasons to them. I explained why our values are different. It was never a one day answer! They would come back with different questions and I would answer again and again. It has been a huge struggle to make them understand the social values we bring from our country. The open way of discussing everything with my girls helped me to shape their values. Gradually when they grew, they saw their friends were partying all night, getting drunk and being embarrassed. And those experiences helped them to understand my points. We had a few hiccups on this issue. Now when I look back it makes me laugh, but at the time it was hard to deal with Lily. When she was a little bit older, she told me "Thank you so much for not letting me go! Those friends met their boyfriends at that time and they made their life so messy. Thank goodness I was not with them." So now she understands. But at that time it was difficult to give an acceptable answer to her *whys*. It was difficult.

I never felt my children were being isolated because of the boundaries we set. In my experience, Kiwis are not as inquisitive about other people's lives as South Asians are. It is very good and healthy. My children's friends knew that sleepovers were outside the boundary for my family.

We are Catholic and religion is one of the most important beliefs that I tried to pass on to my children, and we would love to see them passing it to their children. Their husbands need to be practising Catholic too. If they choose anybody out of their

religion, honestly I will be upset. At the end of the day, it is their life and their choice, but we would be deeply disappointed if they choose anyone outside our religion.

I am trying to keep at least communicative Sri Lankan language alive in them. It would be extremely complicated if I tried to teach my children reading and writing. Here people need to go to the Buddhist temples to learn our language. I did not like that because I do not like the community. If we were Buddhists maybe we would go there, but we are not Buddhists. If we go to the temples we will have to meet with the whole community and we prefer not to. We have a very limited and easy going group of friends from Sri Lanka.

Our traditional dance form is Kandyan. Here in Christchurch, no one teaches it. In Christchurch, Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil communities are united and they are more into Bharatanatyam, an Indian dance form. But it is not Sri Lankan dance. I did not want to let my children learn Bharatanatyam and think that it is their own like many other Sri Lankan children do. Besides, we did not want to mingle with the Sri Lankan Tamil community.

Our clothing is totally adopted from this country. Our native dress is the saree which is quite impossible to wear in this wet, cold and windy weather. I never wore one myself here. My children haven't ever worn one. Maybe when we will visit home, they will try - someday. In the case of a festival, it is appreciated here that people wear traditional clothes, but otherwise, I feel it looks odd to act as a separate identity from the whole. Even in the time of the festivals, we never felt the urge to dress up traditionally.

The biggest festival for our family has always been Christmas. We value it for our religion. Going to the church, decorating the Christmas tree, exchanging gifts - these are the ways we celebrate here. As we did in Sri Lanka. In addition, we used to visit relatives and have an extended family get together. It is the only thing we miss, but after all these years we have got used to it. Other than that everything is perfect, and here Christmas has become grander than at home as it is the biggest festival of this country. In Sri Lanka, the biggest festival is the Sri Lankan New Year festival in April. It is mainly organised by Buddhists. We celebrate New Year on the first of

January. As Catholics, we always had a separate cultural identity - even inside Sri Lanka. Here we do not feel the need to celebrate any other native festival.

One cultural aspect I value strongly in New Zealand is the way people educate children. If I look at my own culture, people always force children to study. You will find parents applying pressure to study from a very young age. There it is always competition: always a rat race of scores. Children need to push themselves to their limits from the very beginning. They need to carry heavy school bags, get classes from after-school tutors, have home tutors, and the only thing that actually matters to their parents is their study. But we never forced our children to study or pressured them to become something we desire. They chose the path where they want to go. We supported them in their journey to find their dreams - we still do. But never set any goal for them to achieve.

Back at home, it is very orthodox; it is black and white with very narrow viewpoints in most matters. I don't want to pass on the rigidity of my native culture. I want my children to be open to the world. Be more experienced in some ways, to know people better - and then decide.

Now you can find a lot of food shops from different countries: Thai restaurants, Indian cuisine, Sushi shops everywhere. But sixteen years ago when we came here different foods were not common. My children's classmates did not take differently smelling food positively. The nasty comments my children got were never pleasant. But we were strong enough to ignore them.

When I first started working I felt a lot of racism. I found it very hard to cope with. My husband found it very hard at his workplace. Time has changed everything. Luckily my children haven't had any big issue that can affect their lives. I found that the schools where they went were very strict about it and never differentiated between students. They encouraged the community to come together very often. That was very helpful for the students and their whānau to grow as a school community.

I have seen that Christchurch has evolved a lot towards multiculturalism over the last one and a half decades. I feel that I am very much at home here. I don't feel like an

outsider or a guest or that my place is somewhere else. We keep our country's culture only inside our home through our food, values or entertainment. But when we are outside we do not have any separate cultural identity other than our faces. I feel we do belong here.

I can still remember how we got a very big box of papers from the immigration about housing, people, the Treaty relationships and other things before coming here. So I read every page from that box before coming; I wanted to know as much as I could about where I was going. Every immigrant person should know about the land and its culture before entering.

If you compare the position of the Māori and Australian Aborigines, there is a huge difference. By comparison, Māori are getting good status. Here, Kiwis and Māori look the same, but inside there is always a differentiation. Theoretically, they do have the same status of being a citizen of this country. But I don't think they are experiencing it practically. When we turn on the television and watch the news we often hear about the criminal activity of the Māori people. Media often show negatives and so people stereotype Māori: they go to the low decile schools, are involved with crime, live a poor socio-economic life, and like to live in a restricted community rather than mixing with others.

I don't understand why they are still having an education crisis. There was a time when the settlers were the oppressor and the Māori were oppressed. In history their language was crushed; they did not get the freedom to develop educationally. But at the time we are living, this country is offering everything the same to everyone. Nothing is reserved. As I am a preschool teacher, I can tell you that teachers are committed to being equally supportive, but if you read various papers or research you will find many of them don't want to stand in one line. Perhaps, to preserve their uniqueness they are keeping themselves separate, which is actually letting them stay backward.

The language needs to be alive. After preschool, the Māori language has less use in mainstream education. Back in time, when the indigenous people were not allowed to speak in their own language in wider spaces, the language was damaged. That

generation faced obstacles in their language development. However, we see the government is still not making practical and specific steps to ensure use of this language, and so it is again lacking importance.

Did you hear about any national or mandatory exam that says you need to pass a Māori language test? Does any migrant need to learn anything about the language and culture before coming to the country? Do they need to use anything from the language in any of their work? If you look for the answer, you will see that there is no practical use for it.

Children from different ethnicities come with the same value to me. They are all children; their ethnicity does not matter. A Māori child is just like an Indian child or a Malaysian child or a Kiwi child. We never differentiated. We say every child is equal. But when we are teaching practically, if one kid is the only representative of his or her culture, it is very difficult to bring that culture in front of everyone.

If the school wants to involve anything about every culture in their day to day curriculum then it will be a mess. For instance, if they have over two hundred and seventy children in the school and only my three children are Sri Lankan, it would be very difficult and in a sense a burden to other kids to formally learn about Sri Lankan culture. I think education about culture should not be included in the formal study. Whatever schools are doing now, it is good enough from my point of view.

### **Mother-daughter bond as a means of cultural education**

Ashari's story brings the dimension of time and extended experience in this study. She smiles often with her eyes, and to me, her smile speaks of her satisfaction with the challenges she has faced and her sense of success, both in supporting her daughters' education and in her own work as an educator. She speaks about herself as someone who has integrated successfully into New Zealand life and has helped her daughters to do so at the same time as she has preserved the key values that are important to her.

Ashari repeatedly stresses the importance of developing strong mother-daughter bonds with each of her daughters, who respectively opened three different windows for her to learn about parenting. She stresses the key element was good communication: she talks about the

importance of building a friendly relationship with her children and states confidently that she was always very open with Rosy, Lily and Mary and will talk about everything. As a result, her daughters share their private and public activities. Ashari did not work until her youngest child went to school, so she had time to spend with her children. She acknowledges that the availability of time was very helpful to build a strong relationship and clear communication with her daughters and to be open to every sort of discussion. She perceives that the mother-daughter bond became her main medium for teaching her children. The value of strong mother-daughter relationships, especially in the cases of grown-up children, are variously addressed in many studies, including those by Chodorow (1978) and Fischer (1991). Ashari maintains that the strength and trust in her relationships with her daughters allows her to explicitly and firmly guide them in the ways they navigate between family values and the practices they observe around them. She describes the cultural navigation that she has taken with her daughters in terms of generally adapting into New Zealand society but reserving the right to assert her own family values about relationships and religious beliefs.

### **Resisting teenage peer pressures**

In discussion, Ashari highlights an area of New Zealand culture that she actively rejected. Ashari repeatedly acknowledges that the family values with which she was brought up in her childhood are extremely important to her and are the central aspect of her culture of origin that she wanted to transmit to her children. A key value is the way her girls would partake in social activities and relate to boys and alcohol. She speaks about her firm expectation that they should not have any kind of boyfriend before an “appropriate age”, and relates how she discussed her expectations with her children before they even became old enough to understand the concept of having a boyfriend. She carefully avoids criticising girls who have boyfriends at an early age but affirms: “This culture is strictly prohibited in this house; it is not for my daughters.” In this respect, it seems that she has carried forward the social beliefs of her original culture. Dion and Dion (2001), Bhatia and Ram (2004) variously noted the ways gender plays a role in many Asian societies in determining the degree of restrictiveness by which parents monitor their children’s heterosexual relationships: girls, they found, are more restricted than boys. However, Ashari’s values may also be seen as reflective of her deeply held religious belief as discussed below.

Ashari recounts how her daughters wanted to know about the reasons behind the rules she set them and those their friends seemed to live by. They would ask many questions. “Especially Lily was very inquisitive,” she recalls, and reports her habitual answer: “First you need to finish your study and when you are mature enough to take a good decision, you can choose. You need to mature to choose.” She recalls that sometimes arguments would last for a long time but she was strict adhering to her rules. She describes an argument that occurred when Lily was about twelve years old. Lily told her mother that she wanted to hang around the shopping mall with her friends at the weekend. Ashari explained that the family did not go to the mall on weekends and she would not allow her daughter to go alone. A number of cold fights followed. Lily would be upset when the whole family went to the shopping mall on a weekday and would grumble that her mother was separating her from her friends. “If I became soft,” Ashari says, “Lily might have continued with similar scenes about other issues.”

Ashari stresses the importance of firmness coupled with discussion and clear explanation. “For instance,” she recalls, “we always let them go to some of their friend’s houses or to party with them. We knew where they were going, we knew the parents of those friends. But I never let them go for the sleepovers.” She adds that even now she keeps “a good eye” on her daughters’ activities. During their adolescent period especially she would always observe who her children are mingling with. In every visit, she would make sure that the parents of the children would be at home so that the children would not be unsupervised. By keeping a good relationship with her daughters’ friends and their families she was able to keep an eye on their movements and ensure they followed her rules. She remained strict about forbidding sleepovers all through her girls’ school life. She recalls, “I told my children that they can stay at their friend's place until 10.30 pm or maximum 11 pm. It doesn’t matter how far the home is, I always picked them after that time. I explained my reasons to them and they understood. It may sound like I was always being suspicious and doing activities like a detective. But what I did was deliberate and I was specific about my points. I couldn’t let my children ruin their future.”

Ashari reflects that she and her husband continuously tried to maintain a balance between their restrictiveness and their children’s demand for socialising. Ashari let her children enjoy time with their friends, meet with them at some weekends, attend parties but never let them cross the limits she had set for her family.

Ashari's need to set boundaries aligns with the experience of other South Asian migrants also finds it struggling to deal with the conflicting values of each culture. Nayar (2009) has also described a similar tension experienced by one of her research participants, Nina, a Catholic Indian migrant in New Zealand. The main challenge Nina found in parenting her daughter in New Zealand was based on conflicting values regarding male-female relationships. Nina held to a traditional Indian attitude of not living with a man before marriage, which she found to be in conflict, however, with as New Zealand Pākehā values that consider it is acceptable for a man and woman to live together in a romantic relationship and not be married. Nina also was not willing to compromise her core values. The conflict with her daughters, in her case temporary, that Ashari experienced by playing the protective mother is also echoed in reports of other Asian families. For example, Chao and Tseng (2002) reported that parents and adolescents belonging to migrant communities in western countries have shown strong intergenerational differences in their expectations regarding family and cultural obligations. Foner (1997) stressed the importance of recognising the cultural understandings, meanings and symbols that first generation immigrants bring to the new land with them and that these are critical in understanding immigrant families. Research indicates that the difference in family values is a key way that immigrants see their culture as separate from that of their host country. For instance, in an Australian study, Nesdale and Mak (2000) found that Sri Lankan immigrants saw an important difference between their ethnic cultures and Australian culture, and gave significant emphasis on living according to the standards and values of their own ethnic group.

When asked if she ever felt that she was making her children isolated from their friends Ashari acknowledges that her girls may initially have faced isolation, but they appreciated the reason behind their mother's protectiveness when they became mature. She adds that New Zealanders are less curious than South Asians about other people's personal matters and so were not very judgemental. She considers that after a while the friends of her children and their family understood Ashari's family's values and never offered any challenge to the limits she set. From her point, of her insistence on strict social rules, did not create any barriers either between her and her children or between her children and their friends.



### **Religion at the centre**

Ashari's words place her Catholic religion as "the backbone to everything". Her religion provides a particular and firm foundation on which she can build her integration into her adopted country. It also poses areas of differentiation both from the mass culture of her adopted country and from the predominant cultures of the Sri Lankan community. It provides a value system that her family adheres to and it provides a communal activity and belief that holds them together.

Ashari describes the family religious practice of going to church every weekend. The children have been habituated to his practice from an early age. Ashari received her religious education from her parents in the same way and she has passed this practice to her children. The church day is a family day. It could be either Saturday or Sunday. When the children went to high school, if any of them had a commitment on Saturday night, Ashari recalls that she would say, "That's fine, go to the party. But we will go to church on Sunday". They always tried, as much possible, to go together.

Besides attending church, the family prays together at home. As the elder two girls grew up and have gone to different universities, it is now not possible to all pray together at home, but Ashari says she knows that her daughters still pray before going to sleep. "I know they pray every night," she says confidently "I don't go and check on them but I know and believe that they do it. My second daughter now lives in Dunedin. She goes to the Catholic church every Sunday. I never needed to ask her to do it, she does it for herself." Ashari recounts that when they visited Sri Lanka, they would go to church together with all of their extended family. She stresses the importance of regular practice to develop a faithful religious belief. Through the regularity, she says, it passes to generation after generation. She talks about her desire to transmit those beliefs to her children's future generations. She mentions that both of the elder girls are old enough to choose a life partner. She and her husband expect them to choose someone who belongs to the same religion. She notes that she respects every religion, but as her children are practising Catholics she would like them to choose someone with the same belief. She affirms that the country that person belongs to does not matter; he simply has to be a practising Catholic. In one way this attitude towards marriage is shared by other South Asian migrants. Bhatia and Ram (2004) discussed how attitudes to marriage are imported from the mother country and how daughters South Asian migrants are expected to follow family traditions. DasGupta and Dasgupta (1998) proposed that "out-of-group marriages" are recognised in the South Asian-American community as cultural betrayal or "cultural dilution"

(p. 123). What is perhaps different in Ashari's case is that her own religion seems to place her outside her dominant national culture, as discussed below, and that it provides a basis for assimilating into New Zealand culture rather than being a marker of cultural separation.

### **Language and the obstacles to transmission**

Ashari shares that she is grateful for her language, Sinhala, and sees it as one of the most important aspects of her home culture. However, she acknowledges that her children's Sinhala language skill is limited: it is at a basic communication level, and they cannot read or write in the language. She has tried to teach them the spoken language by talking with them in Sinhala but does not feel fully successful. The elder two children understand their native language well. The youngest one does not understand but has the interest to learn.

Since her children have more contact with English than with their native language Ashari finds it hard to preserve the language in them. Before coming to New Zealand, this family used to live in Thailand and it was then easier for them to visit home more often. After coming to New Zealand the visits home became fewer because of expense, distance, and the children's educational needs. Rosy and Lily go to different universities; their holidays are at different times. It became more complex to manage everybody's time to visit home.

Gradually the elder girls' speaking skills deteriorated and now they can speak minimal Sinhala. Ashari is still trying to have more visits to Sri Lanka, especially to develop Mary's familiarity with Sri Lankan language and cultures.

In addition, Ashari reflects that the girls have become shy about the difference in their accent from that of their parents. They have had little chance to interact in Sinhala outside their home, and eventually, have stopped using the language at home too. Her experience aligns with Nayar's (2015) explanation of the progression of losing native language in the process of acculturation. Nayar described that at the beginning of acculturation people may choose to speak their native language within the home and feel comfortable with it, but in time when they start to interact more with people of the new community, they may gradually move towards speaking the language of the mainstream culture. She hypothesised that when there is minimal contact in with the members of host country there is less acculturation and less loss of language; on the other hand, if contact grows and acculturalisation develops the language loss will be greater. Ashari says, "Whenever we visit Sri Lanka, they get more chance of interacting in Sinhala and then the elder two start picking up the language very quickly. But

here it is not their everyday language. If you talk to them here in Sri Lankan, they will answer in English.” At home Ashari and her husband talk mostly in Sinhala. The use of language with their children is different. She explains, “With the older two, I talk in Sri Lankan but they answer in English. But for the younger one, if we really want an answer from her or want to talk, we have to use English. Otherwise, she won’t reply, because she doesn’t understand much. She understands very basic Sinhala.” Ashari is still trying to help her understand the language. She says that she fervently wishes to pass on a communicative language. However, reading and writing have never been on her wish list.

### **Resistance to the wider Sri Lankan community**

Ashari explains that while there was an opportunity for her children to learn to read and write in Sinhala at the local Buddhist temple, she chose to not use it. Members of the local Sri Lankan community people run Sunday classes. Ashari initially cites religious differences: as a Catholic, she did not feel comfortable sending her daughters to a Buddhist temple. However, as the discussion continues she acknowledges that religion is not the only reason: she and her husband are not interested in getting involved with the local Sri Lankan community in a big way. She admits to a preference for avoiding engagement with the community. Living in Christchurch, she says, gives her the privilege to choose who to let into her life. Within Sri Lanka it was difficult to make such choices; now she can choose not to get involved with the Sri Lankan Buddhist community.

Ashari made a similar choice in regard to Sri Lankan arts. “My children are thoroughly exposed to Sri Lankan music,” she says. She brings DVDs of traditional music back from visits to Sri Lanka, and the family listening to them together after dinner. Her children can join in some of those songs. And DVDs allow them to watch traditional dance performances. However, the girls have never had any formal training in traditional singing or dance. Many of the Sri Lankan and Indian children learn Bharatanatyam dance from a teacher in Christchurch. Ashari explains that Bharatanatyam is not a Sri Lankan traditional dance form, although the Sri Lankan Tamil community promote it as their traditional dance. Bharatanatyam, she says, is traditional for South Indians; Kandyan is the traditional Sri Lankan dance form. Therefore she has never taken her children to the Bharatanatyam trainer like other Sri Lankan migrants. She suggests that if she could find a Kandyan dance trainer in

Christchurch, there may be a change of decision, but above all her girls have never shown an interest in learning to dance.

She relates that she and her husband have tried to enable their children to travel and have direct experience of different environments as much as they could: “Through travel children learn from the real-life experience.” The girls have travelled with their parents to different destinations mainly in Sri Lanka to experience more about their culture: “We always tried to take them to the places to have experience. If we stayed in our home and taught them verbally about different aspects of our culture, it might be easier for us, but we thought it would be more effective if we can take them to those places. So whenever we visited home, we took them many places, to the Buddhists temples, architectures, and historical places. We tried to make them feel the texture of their roots so that whenever they will close their eyes, they can have a feel of it.”

Ashari has developed a distinct cultural identity that she identifies is different from how people recognise Sri Lankans. In Sri Lanka, she was raised within a religious minority group and she has brought that sense of separation with her. In our discussions, it became clear that Ashari has a range of classifications she applies to the Sri Lankan community. She wants it to be understood how she is “very different than others even inside my country”. Her stance is one I have often observed in various migrant people. *We are not like them*, they might say. Or *that is not our culture*. Distinctness is being asserted from the globally marketed picture of the culture of their country. Many of my Indian friends have used the phrase: *not all Indians do the bhangra*<sup>25</sup>. When people in New Zealand, and probably in our own countries, look at a migrant they often classify that person in terms of popularised prototypes. However, as Ashari’s story shows, migrants do not necessarily conform to the mainstream culture of their homeland. They come with various individual personal, family and group histories as well as with their own immediate experiences. In Ashari’s case, religion is a strong determinant of her attitudes and values, but it could be misleading to ascribe all her attitudes and values to religion, there are no doubt other factors which we did not explore which have shaped her individual identity. Sri Lanka is a country that has been ravaged by tribal and sectarian civil war. Perhaps some of her decisions about avoiding extended engagement with other Sri Lankans may be associated with the threat of continuing tensions.

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<sup>25</sup> A traditional Punjabi dance that has been taken up by Bollywood.

What is significant from Ashari's case is the reminder that she is an individual who does not fit readily into a pre-made cultural box and that she actively resists being manoeuvred into one.

### **Wanting to blend and belong**

While asserting her commitment to personal values, Ashari repeatedly talks about her desire to blend into her adopted country. She talks about wearing western clothes, saying they are more comfortable living in Christchurch. It is, she says, completely inappropriate to wear traditional clothes in this country's wet, cold and windy weather. She has seen some South Asian immigrants, including Sri Lankan, wearing saree outside their homes, but considers it inappropriate to wear an ethnic dress outside the home unless there is a festival celebration: it only makes the wearers separate, she says, from the Christchurch community.

As the discussion turns to festivals Ashari explains that migration has created no major change: Christmas has always been the most important festival because of its religious value. Ashari remarks that for many of the Kiwis she has known Christmas is only an occasion for fun and partying. For her family, Christmas has primarily been a religious festival: "It is a sacred festival for us and the first activity is to go to church at midnight to pray". Christmas is a festival she shares with the wider community: "We have good friends here. Most of them are not from Sri Lanka. We have many Kiwi friends and they visit us at Christmas."

Although the biggest festival of Sri Lanka is in the April Sri Lankan New Year, Ashari and her family never celebrate it in Christchurch: rather they celebrate 1<sup>st</sup> January as New Year like other Kiwis. Ashari explains that because of their religious background, the family has a visible distinctness from the predominant cultural outlook of Sri Lankans.

### **Valuing the opportunity to choose**

Ashari talks repeatedly about the new opportunities immigration brought to her and her family. She recounts how her understandings of education changed as a result of coming to New Zealand. She criticises how in Sri Lanka parents would put unnecessary pressure on their children in terms of study, and how school focused mainly on academic study and how students would need to memorise to get good scores. She appreciates New Zealand school education, especially the way young children learn by playing. She also appreciates that

students are encouraged to choose their own educational pathway as well as their future work and so do not need to build a career to just please their parents.

She also talks appreciatively about the openness of New Zealand attitudes and about not wanting children to develop a rigid way of looking at things. She notes that many Sri Lankan families in Christchurch do not want their children to associate with any culture other than their own. She does not want it to happen in her family. She expects her girls to grow up in New Zealand's culture and negotiate what to take or not from it. She struggles a little to explain her feelings about the rigidity of thinking in Sri Lanka: "When my children visited, they were big enough to understand the orthodox way of thinking of Sri Lankan culture. Even when they meet Sri Lankan people here, other than our friends, they also get the same experiences of the conservativeness. We have talked about the differences. They can see the differences pretty well and I am pleased that they have been brought up in this openness."

However, not all New Zealand attitudes sit comfortably with Ashari. Her thinking about boy-girl relationships has been discussed above. She also finds it challenging that people do not practice religion from an early age in New Zealand as people do in Sri Lanka. She recalls how one of her girls was teased as *the church girl* because she would go to church with her family rather than hanging out with the girls at her school. Although the children attended a Catholic school, they were the only ones in their classes who went to church regularly. Lily was so embarrassed that she used to tell her parents to take her to any church far away from her school area so that no one from school can see her going to the church. Ashari interprets the girls' teasing as a factor of adolescence but she is also aware that having a different coloured skin and different behaviours made Lily seem different as a person. She comments that such stereotyping was more likely to occur when she had newly arrived in New Zealand and when the elder girls were little than it does now. Various research studies report the tendency to stereotype immigrants. For instance, Nayar (2009) highlighted the lack of knowledge by mainstream New Zealanders about the Indian cultural diversity and argued for the need for further education to prevent stereotyping. Collie, Kindon, Liu and Podsiadlowski (2010) examined the experiences of Assyrian Christian immigrants from Iraq in New Zealand who continuously deal with being stereotyped as Muslims who are not 'peaceful people' and identified such stereotyping as discrimination.

Ashari argues that New Zealand has grown in its understanding of multiculturalism. Whereas in earlier years she and her elder children often felt hurt by comments that highlighted their

difference or the difference of their food, now she feels accepted. She relates the experience of Lily being taunted for the fried rice in her lunch box, and adds, “Now Lily often makes rice and curry for her flatmates and they even said that they love eating it!”

### **Learning the culture of New Zealand: Treaty and multiculturalism**

Ashari contends that in Christchurch the experience of multiculturalism depends a lot on the immigrant person’s choice. She stressed that even if the new country becomes more welcoming to the migrants and if the migrants do not want to make themselves involved with the new culture, they are not contributing much to multiculturalism. She says, “It is just the way you take it, I suppose. You can choose the way how you want to live. If you choose to live with one lot of people and do nothing outside your own country community then you are not living in a multicultural community. It is your choice: how you want to live.”

Overall Ashari considers that she has found Christchurch to be a welcoming place for immigrants and it is becoming more and more multicultural with time. She acknowledges that she is a firm believer in multiculturalism. She also admits that it took time for her to make Christchurch home. In the first few years when they immigrated, she and her family behaved like outsiders. She remembers her experience when they first came to Christchurch. People would stare at them, “thinking about who are we, where we came from; we were so different.” Now, she says, the context is quite welcoming. She reflects that it was probably a lack of experience on her part and her husband’s part as well as on the part of their New Zealand colleagues and neighbours that were the reasons for the unwanted experiences of discrimination they faced initially in their workplaces. She reflects that with time they and the city have become increasingly multicultural and she is happy that the time has moulded her and the city to fall in love with each other. Her eyes shine as she talks about the joy of living in Christchurch. “Now when you go to the city centre or any place and walk in the streets you’ll see thousands of different nationalities,” she says. “You’ll feel you are not the only one.” She reflects that she and her family have matured a lot, as well as the wider Christchurch community has been becoming more experienced.

Ashari also notes that people now travel a lot outside New Zealand. Exposure to other countries is also making them mature. Internet, television, media is making it a lot easier to accept difference. “Before,” she says, “New Zealand was another world. It was very isolated. The only place most of the Kiwis travelled to for their vacations at that time was Australia.

Now it is not like that. Time and experiences are making this city as well as the whole country more and more open, wider, exposed.”

Ashari recounts that she learned about New Zealand’s Treaty relationship before coming here: she sees that as a duty for an immigrant. She explains that she understands that New Zealand’s cultural commitment addresses both the culture of its indigenous Māori people and that of the first settlers from European countries. She firmly states her commitment to the bicultural relationship initiated by the Treaty and affirms how she supports in her work and in teaching her girls. She also reflects critically on how she sees the Treaty concepts enacted in the society around her.

### **Reflections about equality, media, language and the significance of the Treaty**

Ashari shares her strong opinions about the extent to which the indigenous Māori are included in the mainstream. She states that she does not see both parties are getting into everything side by side and considers that Māori and Kiwi<sup>26</sup> always have a different status.

“On a surface level it looks like everything is going well,” she says. When pressed for a further explanation she exclaims, “It is so much to tell! It is not like you can express in words, it is more like a feeling you develop after living in a country for quite a long time.”

Ashari reflects that perhaps the differences are not as visible in Christchurch because there is a relatively smaller Māori community. The family lived in Auckland for a while, and differences were more intensely noticeable there, she says. In Auckland, she found that there were many Māori communities that are underdeveloped, that contain a lower social economy and have a higher crime rate. “People often stereotype Māori people like criminals,” she says, ‘If you know the characteristics of any tough area, you will automatically understand that the Māori are living in those areas, in a kind of pockets.’ She suggests that the stereotyping that exists in people’s minds represents a real status differentiation in a broader picture. She says, “If there was no discrimination, people would never get those thoughts.”

She tends to hold the media responsible for some of the problem. She acknowledges the positive impact of the Māori television channels in promoting Māori culture and language. However, she also comments on the negative portrayal of Māori people that she sees constantly on the news channels and in newspapers that she is sure is not the only truth about

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<sup>26</sup> The term Kiwi is a loose colloquialism for a New Zealander, so its designation is not fixed to either signify non-Māori or to include Māori. Ashari seems to be using it to refer to non-Māori New Zealanders.



them. She suggests that the media in every country mainly presents a politically influenced picture. “Media mostly shows crimes and gangs of the Māori community.” She says. It was not a good side and it could never be the only side!” She adds that her children often make a similar comment to her on this matter. She suggests that the media have arguably been trying to support the dominant power by upholding negative stereotypes of Māori. She adds her impression that during the period of the current “pro-Māori” government, the media are showing an effort to change their stereotypical portrayal of the Māori community.

Ashari’s detailed reflections indicate that she has thought frequently and deeply about the issues involved in New Zealand’s two national cultures and the people in them. She talks about her understandings of the causes of the gap between the two cultures. She suggests that some of the current gaps are caused by a lack of interest on the part of Māori to come forward. She shares her opinion that on the one hand many Māori communities are not yet ready to come out from their unique cultural boundaries, and on the other hand, Kiwi politicians might be using their power to keep the differences. “Māori likes to live in a bounded community,” she says. “And the white Kiwis often don’t want to buy a house and live in those areas because of the crime rate. As a result, those areas are staying closed, underdeveloped and hypothetically restricted for others.”

Ashari links the high crime rate to a lack of formal education. She perceives that students from indigenous communities often showing low achievement in school education and have a high chance of dropping out. She suggests the reason behind this may be related to the conservativeness of the indigenous culture. She argues that Māori are still intending to keep their identity significantly separate from the mainstream and they still do not seem willing to assimilate “from top to toe”. She says that she respects the uniqueness of Māori identity but she considers that staying separate only can keep them behind. She expresses frustration about the inequality in educational achievements but affirms she is hopeful that they will achieve at the same pace after a couple of generations. “The Māori are the natives of this land and I expect the gap should be closed! There should be no gap” she says. She considers that it will take a lot of time to actually build up their lost self-confidence. She says that present generations might not have equality but future generations may believe and experience that they are equal. To make it happen, she reiterates, both parties need to come closer, break the gap and be more flexible.

An observable area where the government is failing Māori, Ashari argues, is in not having enough in the education system to keep Māori language alive. She states that as a teacher in a preschool, she and her colleagues are committed to teaching many aspects of Māori cultural values, language and arts, and various activities are set up to expose children to Māori culture as much as possible. However, she and other teachers have been receiving various criticism about the language promoting activities. For instance, many parents have asked her, “Where are our children going to use it? You might as well teach some Mandarin and that can be useful. Why are you teaching Māori? It has no use.” To stop these questions from migrant parents, she says, firstly the language needs to be useful. She suggests that an entrance language exam and a mandatory basic language course should be created and given to new immigrants. She also argues the need to increase the use of the language in the workforce so that people can perceive the importance of keeping it alive. People should be able to speak in both of the languages, she argues. She contends that New Zealand will only be able to celebrate its complex cultural identity practically if it can offer a mandatory bilingual educational and social system. She considers that it will take a long time to make this happen because the gap in status between the two languages is now huge. She states confidently, “If the decision-makers want this to happen, it will happen; if the people become persevering enough to make it happen, it can be done.” However, she says that this is still in the nature of a daydream for her, because everyone from the power-owners to the general people all acknowledges, intentionally or unintentionally, that Māori language is a useless dying language. She adds, “Maybe in the interest of both parties after few generations the gap will be closed. But I cannot see it can be done in my lifetime or in my children’s lifetime. In my view, there is still no effective effort from the power owners.”

Ashari is also somewhat critical of the pre-school level practice of teaching the language. She says that they are only teaching some Māori songs, phrases, words and prayers, and that is not enough even to start learning the language: “Rhyming, singing and using some words...it does not mean anything! To learn a proper language you need to go through correct reading and writing practice as well. That’s not happening! And maybe, it will not happen for a long time! Because from what I see the Kiwis still think it is a dying, invalid, useless language and do not bother to learn it.” She adds, “This attitude did not develop in one night. It is the result of practice carried out generation after generation with the support of the power owners. First, this attitude has to change with effective actions.”

For Ashari the *bicultural* idea is still just a political concept. She states that without language, there is no point to call New Zealand a bicultural country: “If you crush the language, you crush the people. If you cannot keep the language, and still call it a bicultural country - then it is just a joke!”

Ashari explains that she learned about the Treaty when she studied early childhood education. She recounts a history of how the Treaty developed and ends by saying that as a result of the Treaty and the events that followed it “Māori lost their land, power and ownership gradually. While signing the agreement, the Māori leaders didn’t understand that they are actually giving their rights to the British and the British practically took over the power of this land.” She explains that her children learned about the Treaty and the “cultural set-up of this land” formally at school: history was included in the school curriculum. She voices some concern about whether history is appropriately written in the school books. She recalls an incident: when her daughter, Rosy was in Year 12 she read Orange<sup>27</sup>’s book about the Treaty in preparation for writing an essay and Rosy told her mother that they had read a lot of things explained in a different way in their school books. Ashari adds that neither she nor her husband had ever intentionally tried to teach their children about these matters. Whenever it comes into their discussions, they let the discussion flow and children learn from the discussion. They always watch the news together and whenever they see any relevant news on the television or hear about anything, they discuss it. Ashari’s husband often shares his experiences and point of views in these discussions and the discussion often turn into “a big conversation”. “These conversations are good learning sessions for our children,” Ashari says.

Ashari explains that her home has been open to welcome her daughters’ friends; Kiwi friends, Māori friends or any friends from another ethnicity. She has never differentiated and has observed her children do not. She explains that all three girls have been able to engage with children from many cultures from pre-school onwards. They socialise with children who are Kiwi, Māori, or from any other country: “Every child was the same for me and I see the same attitude in my daughters too. We have never had any problem with any race, caste or colour.” She adds that she has always tried to make her children aware of their adopted country’s socio-political position, and so any negative media coverage about ethnicity has never had any effect on the children’s friendships.

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<sup>27</sup> Claudia Orange is an acknowledged authority on the history of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Acceptance of all cultures is important to Ashari, but she does not consider that it is the role of a school to encourage individual cultures. She reflects that her children's school did not do anything specifically to acknowledge Sri Lankan culture. There were some yearly multicultural activities, such as a cultural week with dress-ups and food stalls. She considers these activities were arranged to give the Kiwi people exposure to the multicultural school environment. But none of them involved Sri Lankan culture: "Chinese people have a bigger community here so every school did lots of activities regarding Chinese culture," she says. "But, at that time my girl was the only Sri Lankan in her class. So they never did anything Sri Lankan at their school." However, Ashari does not find anything wrong in the absence of extensive multicultural activities on school premises. She considers it would be chaotic if every culture would get attention and be taught about at school. She adds that parents' involvement is the most important contribution to multicultural activity at school. She reflects that parents probably always intend to support the teachers by bringing their culture to the school, but because of full-time work and other engagements, it is often hard for them to get involved in such activities at their children's school. She adds that parents from a different culture may feel isolated and that could make them avoid participation. "Perhaps, they feel shy to stand in front everyone and to be the only person from their culture," she says. However, she also suggests that it would be good if schools could convince parents to participate so that schools could include every culture in informal activities. On the whole, however, Ashari support schools' current activities and says she believes that schools are doing enough to give good exposure to different cultures: "Day by day schools are becoming more inviting to all the different cultures," she says. "Parents need to join their part of the string to make a bigger web."

### **Teasing out key threads**

The key elements that stand out for me in working with Ashari's account are her firmness in defining which cultural knowledge and values are important for her daughters to learn, her claiming of responsibility for their learning and her considered and assertive critical reflections on the society around her.

A theme that runs through all her recollections is the impact of time. Ashari has been in New Zealand for a considerably longer time than the other participants in this study. She repeatedly comments how time changed the attitudes of the wider community she lives in and

how her girls have come to accept the wisdom of her rules over time. She also suggests that she herself has grown to better understand her adopted country and her place in it over time. An important implication is that immigration to a new country is a gradual process. A new immigrant inevitably carries the thinking and the symbols of their previous home with them: it takes time to consider what should be held onto to and what could be adopted from the new country. Perceptions and attitudes that characterise the first years after arrival do not necessarily carry forward to future years. In terms of education, it is important for schools to realise that migrant children and their families are potentially in a constant process of change – in understanding their world as well as in where they are living.

However, at the same time as Ashari acknowledges change over time, she also holds firmly to a range of deep-seated principles. She sees her values about her children's social development as non-negotiable. She has no intention of adapting them to better fit into either the local Sri Lankan community or the Kiwi community of Christchurch. Her various decisions, and the values that underlie them seem to come from her Catholic religion, her traditional family values and from her personal assessment and navigation of the threats and potential benefits inherent in the communities around her. She owns her choices. Her story underlies the importance of considering each immigrant as an individual without seeking to apply a stereotyping ethnic ruler.

Ashari calls her Catholicism “the backbone of everything”. It has the effect of separating her from the Sri Lankan community and integrating her into New Zealand. For her, religion is a more important marker of her identity and emotional affiliations than country of origin. New Zealand is a place that accepts and endorses her religion (although she is somewhat disappointed that many New Zealanders do not take religion or its sacred days seriously) and it seems that one of the factors that create her sense of belonging in New Zealand is the Catholic community she has connected with and the fact that Christmas is celebrated nationally. This aspect of her story again emphasises that culture is not only determined by nationality or ethnicity.

Throughout the narrative, Ashari talks about her choice to integrate into New Zealand society rather than to be separate. It is explicit when she talks about herself and her family. It is also implicit in her comments about Māori choosing to stand apart and being disadvantaged socially and educationally as a result, and in her discussion of the responsibility of schools. Ashari has committed to integration as a necessary part of immigration, and her commitment

influences her thinking on many topics. An important implication is that schools need to be aware that some families may seek to integrate more than they wish to assert their cultural difference. Generalising assumptions may not be useful.

It is clear from her discussion that Ashari has strong views about the role of the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand society, the place of Māori and the relationship between the indigenous people and the mainstream. This study does not seek to evaluate her views against any standards. What is readily apparent is that she has studied and carefully thought about the issues and is continuing to learn and critically reflect. She sees the issues as things that are important to her and that she holds some responsibility towards. She has also taken care to involve her children in learning about them and actively discussing them. Her narrative offers an example of one way that immigrant children and their families might engage with the bicultural mandate.

Discussion is a recurring theme in Ashari's narrative. Throughout she talks about teaching her children through open dialogue. She also talks about the need for discussion between schools and parents and between "power-owners", mainstream and Māori communities. She argues that although problems may exist (perhaps even be inevitable) they can be resolved by open and on-going discussion.

## Chapter Seven: Ashshin



*Ashshin Rai is a full time working woman originally from Nepal. She is the mother of a daughter, Mini, aged seven. Ashshin works for the community, as a team member of a non-profitable organisation which aims to support the migrant and refugee community. She lives in Christchurch with her husband Bhadro Rai and only daughter. They are New Zealand citizens. Bhadro works in a business consultancy firm as a consultant. Ashshin and Bhadro both are thirty four years old. Mini is a year two student in a local primary school in Christchurch. This family had been living in Christchurch for more than ten years, owns a house and shares that house with tenants who are also from Nepal.*

### Expectation of a smooth blend

It is really important to understand where we come from; what is our root, what is our native culture. It does not matter where we go or live outside our country; we carry our culture with us, we bring it from our home, our family, our community. It

embraces our ethnic identity. For me, my native culture features me as a Nepali lady from Kathmandu.

I am not the first one who chose to change the place where I live; my ancestors did the same. People move, change place, shift identity. It is in human nature. We are not trees! We are travellers. I am following my ancestors' pathway. They came from village to city to live better; I have also changed my place to build a better future. I have passed through several phases to come to my present identity; I have shaped myself with the demands of shifting contexts. But you know, just like a seed inside a fruit, some pieces of my native culture stays intact in me.

I am from Nepal and anybody can understand that I am an immigrant. It is visible in my face. It is noticeable in my accent, sometimes in my gestures. Mini was born here. She is a citizen of New Zealand. I believe she is Kiwi by birth. She has a Kiwi English accent, she dresses like a Kiwi girl. However, she is carrying her Nepali parents' genes and people often ask her, 'Where are you from?' when they first meet Mini! She would reply, 'I was born here. I am a Kiwi.' Then they would ask again 'where your parents from?' So it is our root that is always linked with my child and she can never leave these questions behind. Her face is carrying her parents' immigrant identity. So it is best for her to know about her root and feel proud of it. For everyone, it is good to understand their origin. And for me, I am habituated to answer this question. I do not feel awkward to answer the same question over and over again. I am neither offended nor ashamed to answer 'Where am I from?' Why should I feel bad about it? Deep inside, being Nepali is my pride. My native culture enriches my ethnic identity.

It is funny that many people I know in Kathmandu will appreciate the parents if their children become more fluent in English than Nepali while living inside Kathmandu. Those children will be treated as smarter kids if they show interest to read English books, recite English poems, listen to and sing English songs, dance with modern or western steps. But when you are abroad, those same people will judge you if your child is unable to speak the Nepali language correctly or shows less interest in Nepali culture. So we, the migrant parents have extra pressure to make our children involved with various native cultural activities. Yes, we have the intention to do it, but sometimes these judgements become a burden to us.



For teaching the spoken language, I and Bhadro speak in Nepali at home and encourage Mini to speak in Nepali as well. We try not to speak English at home, if she speaks in English we do not reply. We always did it deliberately. We never want to hurt her feelings or insult her, but I think without this strictness, she would never understand that she must learn our language.

It is a natural flow for Mini to use English because she is growing up in an English world. We can understand her struggle. Even we have used many English words throughout our life, never identifying them as separate from our language. For instance, toothbrush, toothpaste, plate, glass, pant, shirt, television, table, chair and so on. These English words come on our lips naturally; for Mini, this list is longer.

She is learning to read and write from a Nepali language school run by the Nepali community in Christchurch. I am not expecting her to talk or write as perfectly as us. I know it will never happen. I am not bothered if she has a Kiwi-ish Nepali accent. At least she can understand our language! At least I will be able to communicate with her in my language when I will get old; that's the best part. And at least she will know how to read and write in Nepali.

I am very proud that she has a Kiwi accent in her English, not like her parents. She can speak in English fluently, and now it doesn't sound like she is from Nepal. She is a very intelligent girl and because of her bilingual expertise, she is treating everyone very smartly! If any of my friends visit us at our place and she knows that they speak Nepali she communicates with them in Nepali. But if any foreigner friend visits us she speaks in English. First, she observes and tries to understand the guest's country of origin. She catches it very quickly.

What a child wears, eats, drinks, and speaks is mostly the reflection of the parents. If a child is wearing a dirty dress or talking nasty, it is the fault of her parents. So values are important for every land. And we, the parents, need to keep it in our mind to practise the values we want to teach our children. I think for immigrants, values do not always stay intact just the way they have learned them from their land. Their values change, or I may say alter with the change in their place.

If you have decided to stay in another land, there is no point to keep your native identity all the time and make a burden on that society. I believe the culture of any land develops with its history, climate and geography. It is better for the immigrants to receive the culture, dress of the land as quickly as they can for their survival benefit. Suppose Mini is in a classroom with thirty students, twenty-nine are showing and sharing various cultures. Mini is the only Nepali child and she cannot be isolated strictly and be stuck on her own. It is not healthy. She should know where her parents came from, as well as the New Zealanders' culture, values, and manners. So I expect a complete blend of both of the cultures from her and not to become rigid with any of it.

Short dresses might disrespect Nepali cultural values but I have no problem with that; this is not Nepal. And if Mini also prefers wearing short pants, skirt or a dress like any other young Kiwi girl she can do that; she is a Kiwi! We never expect our daughter to wear any ethnic dress in her regular life. We never do that. We did not even do that in our home country. I grew up in the capital city, and in Kathmandu we never went to our school, college or university wearing an ethnic costume. It is a global world and everyone is prioritising comfort. And to me, wearing a pair of jeans pants and a top is a lot more comfortable than wearing a saree every day. But in celebrations, birthdays, friends' and family gatherings, festivals we always wear traditional dresses. For instance, in Diwali, I will defiantly not wear any jeans and shirt.

In Kiwi culture, people prefer a separate room for a young child, even for a newly born baby. The Plunket nurse suggested it, but I could not do that! In our culture, we do not do that. Not only for the sake of our culture, as a human I couldn't even think to separate her in a different room when she was only one or two months old. We cannot separate our kids at least until they are old enough to take care of themselves. She slept with us until she was six. Even now, sometimes she sleeps with us.

I breastfed my daughter for two and a half years. I grew up watching other mothers parenting in this way. My mom, my grandma, everybody acted in the same way. It is our practice. We have a belief that a longer time of breastfeeding will help my kid to grow fast. Here most of the mothers do it for three months or a maximum of six

months. I couldn't take this culture, and I wish my daughter will also take my culture while in her motherhood.

After all, I am South Asian. The marriage of my daughter is a massive thing for me. It does not matter how educated, liberal, open-minded or how socio-culturally enriched a South Asian parent is; the first preference for choosing the partner of her child will be a well behaved person who carries the same cultural values and who is from the same country of origin. Maybe by a mixture of different cultures in a marriage, we feel insecure about losing our cultural identity. If Mini chooses anyone who is not Nepali, we would appreciate a person with good values, background, culture... you know those kinds of things. Above all, I would like to see a good person standing beside her. We prefer to get a Nepali son-in-law. If not, it doesn't matter whether he is white or black, Indian or Chinese, or Māori. It's not like we will be very happy with that marriage, but we will accept it. And she should not start dating before marriage. I mean intimate dating. We are very strict in this matter. She should not get physically connected with a man without marriage. This is our value, I would never forgive her if she chose to do a live-in relationship or get pregnant without marriage.

We are Hindu and in Nepal, Dashain is the main festival for us. The Nepali community of Christchurch arranges different activities to celebrate Nepali festivals. But it is not the biggest festival here, as in Christchurch the most gorgeous festival for a Hindu is Deepavali or what you call Diwali. In Deepavali, we go to see the performances organised by the Indian community. At home, I decorate the whole house with candles, party lights and outdoor lighting. We also have fireworks. Mini waits for this festival eagerly as she enjoys seeing the fireworks. Teej is a festival for women and my personal favourite. In Teej, we dance for a whole day! We also celebrate Nepali New Year in 14<sup>th</sup> of April organised by the community. My amazing workplace respects the employee's religious beliefs. They give an official holiday to the migrant Muslims to celebrate Eid and to other Indians, Nepalis to celebrate Diwali. Other migrants also get a holiday on their biggest festivals. It is a one day paid leave.

We also celebrate Christmas, Fathers Day, and Mothers Day and so on. None of the festivals celebrated widely in New Zealand make a negative impact on our cultural values. I have seen teenagers enjoy Halloween. They have crazy fun in those parties. If

Mini wants to go to Halloween parties, we will not feel bad about it. We think festivals are for fun, so there is nothing bad about celebrating any festival.

We eat a mixture of western and eastern food. Most nights I prepare a Nepali dinner which is rice, lentils and curry. Sometimes I also make western foods such as baked lamb or chicken, mashed potato and steam vegetables. I like mild spicy food, and I have developed this taste in my daughter as well. I think it helped Mini to like western foods equally. We do not find the western foods too bland like other Asians say.

We have a very strong bond with the Nepali community here. The community involvement is supporting Mini's learning related to her native culture. Mini has developed an intimacy with her Nepali friends and she is learning many things from the communal environment. She is learning language and dancing from the community provided classes. We are celebrating all our festivals with the community. It is more like our big family here.

Every country has its bright and dark sides in its culture. Nepal is not an exception. Male preference is a common characteristic for our countries, I mean South Asian countries. Some admit it, some do not, but it is like an open secret. Everyone knows that we discriminate against our daughters in South Asia. Our women do not get the confidence to speak up about their needs and basic demands. They are quite shy to express their feelings. It is ironic that in many cases, they are even shy to tell you about their husband's name! I really do not want to pass this in-built culture of male prioritising to my daughter. I want her to be a confident, independent and smart girl with a western idea of equity.

For us, religion is not the first priority and the practices are not something like, 'You have to do'. My daughter knows God is good, and it is good to worship him. She has always seen that and how we worship in celebrations. Worshipping God is a part of her festive celebrations. I don't imagine Mini growing up as a strict religious believer, the way we believed religion in our childhood. My daughter knows that her parents are Hindu and she is by birth Hindu as well. We are not atheist or making Mini one, but we are not making her impractical or rigid.

I believe that to some extent religion brings rigidity. It is a problematic topic for me to talk about and the debate on it will never end. Education brings light to the human mind. However, I have seen many educated people acting irrationally in regards to talking about their religion. I have experienced that rigidity in my childhood and I am not passing those blind beliefs to Mini.

I grew up watching my parents worship Gods. We just followed them. We went to temples and saw God as the supreme supernatural entity. God is standing far from humans. But for me, it is quite different to understand God as an adult. It is not like my childhood when I used to believe in God as an ultimate magician and that miracles happen. You know! I am talking about those kinds of fluffy unreal beliefs. To me, it is about good deeds.

Yes, I do pray in front of an idol in the festivals because it makes me feel connected to the community, and it brings the joy of the celebration. I do not worship in order to have any miracle. It is not to please another person, just for my pleasure. My daughter is also learning those practices as a part of her festival celebration. Apart from all of it, practising religion is not easy here you know. For instance, we must use incense sticks for worship and here many house owners do not allow to do it. If you are living in a rental property, you may be asked not to use them. So it is safe and trouble-free to keep religion apart from everyday life when you are a migrant.

At home, if any senior person says anything is right, then no matter what would be the consequences, people will take it as right! I suppose it is a practise you will find all over Nepal. Elderly peoples' words are treated like the words of God in our family and community! As if whatever they are saying it is written in the Bible, Veda or Quran! We cannot tell an elder person that you are saying or doing wrong. We are not teaching this practice to Mini. We teach her that wrong is always wrong and right is always right. It does not matter who does it. If anybody says or does wrong, whether it is I or Bhadro or even if it is Mini's grandparents, it will always be wrong.

Mini's preschool and school value the opinion of children from different cultures. We haven't faced any differentiation from the school; everyone is pretty open to receive us. For example, I'll tell you a story. One day the teachers of Mini's preschool put the

flags of different countries on the board but forgot to put the flag of Nepal. My daughter pointed this out and told her teacher that she was sad about it. The teacher took her comment very seriously and apologised. The very next day, they included the flag of Nepal on the board. Mini was only three and a half years old then and she still recalls how happy she was seeing the flag on the board. Whenever my daughter talks about it, her eyes filled with the sparkles of joy. Perhaps it is a very small event but it is valuable for our life. It is an act of appreciation by the school showing they care about each student's opinion.

Although most of the talking is in English, Māori language and culture are also present inside the classroom. Other than these two cultures, I don't see teachers in the primary school are deliberately addressing all the ethnic culture. I feel the activities of the classroom are bicultural and multiculturalism is addressed in the special days and celebrations. It can be any occasion inside the school or anything arranged by Christchurch City Council.

Teachers inform the parents about those events. I have seen parents are planning to visit in a group various events like noodles festival, Diwali. So involvement in anything multicultural is still in the fun part for the children, and it is not bad. If the little stars start to enjoy the fun part of their multicultural surroundings, when they will grow, they may feel interested to learn more of it.

I think the Kiwis mostly have a friend circle from their high school or university and mingle with them all through their life. So when we the adult migrant students come in the University for undergrad or postgrad study, sometimes it becomes quite difficult for both parties to mix. I am not blaming anybody but it was my experience. And I can understand the reasons for those Kiwis' lack of interest, we were so different! We had nothing in common at that time other than our study. So I started to mingle with people who are from a similar context, and as a mother, I chose those who are parents.

I have developed relationships with many people from diverse cultural backgrounds, but perhaps the relationships did not grow to a deeper level. So I should say that relationships with multi-ethnic people work for me on a surface level. I have a few

people here whom I can address as my friends. Most of them are Nepali or migrants from South Asia.

We are the *brown migrants*; many of our experiences as a new migrant are similar. Some are positive some are not, but they are similar experiences. These similarities I suppose create a feeling of empathy for each other. So I think in this way we come close and have the trust to become friends.

They say knowledge is power, and nowadays that power is in your palm. If you want you can read, listen and find out about anything on your smartphone. But still many people ask funny and sometimes silly questions: 'Are you Indian? Is Nepal a part of India? When did you get freedom from British? Are most of the people in your country so short? You are so tiny, my 13 years old boy is taller than you! Hey, I saw one guy from Nepal but he was not brown like you, you are different! Wow, you can speak very good English!' Come on! There is no point to ask funny questions or make these comments. If you really have any question, search on the web, read books or see documentaries. There are plenty of sources to answer you. If those sources are not enough, then go and travel, have experience.

I am talking about both of the parties. I have seen many migrants also ask silly questions to a Māori or Chinese person. But I think we, the migrants, face more than them. It is all about awareness. People need to know more about us, that we are also human, we don't bite! I am sure, people are changing day by day and one day those people will learn more about our diversity and also they will understand their limits to make a comment about others. And it is a continuous process; fifty years ago the situation was quite different. After fifty years, you'll see the picture will be changed again.

For a migrant, it is good to have general knowledge about the history of the land where we live. I do not see it is necessary to have an in-depth knowledge of history. You see, migrants have already learnt the history of their home country all through their life. Learning about every piece of history of the new country would be a burden for them. However, general knowledge is necessary. I have learnt about New Zealand

history in my student life and I have an idea about the important facts. I think that is enough for me.

It is not long ago that Māori started to get their rights back. This is a quite old country, but most of those who are the indigenous first generation tertiary educated are still young. I have a Māori friend from my postgrad time. At that time, she was the first person in my university who did Masters from her tribe. Her whānau were incredibly proud of her achievement. So it is easily understandable that they did not get equal education and have been disadvantaged. This is why we still do not see as many Māori faces doing white collar jobs as Pākehā. But time will bring equity, I believe.

### **Importance of knowing one's origins**

Ashshin's narrative is characterised by an emphasis on acceptance of the realities of migration and adaptation to a new context. She wants to enable her daughter to adapt to and enjoy living as a Kiwi in New Zealand. At the same time, she wants her to retain her sense of where she has come from and to retain the best of her native cultural values.

Ashshin starts her story by talking about the importance of knowing and understanding one's native culture, roots and identity, and emphasises that recognition is not simply a matter of choice: we each carry our cultural heritage within us. She stresses that, although one's culture of origin is important for everybody, it is especially important in an immigrant's life. Her native culture, she says, glorifies her ethnic identity.

Nevertheless, Ashshin poses identity as somewhat of a paradox. She is aware that many people need to repeatedly reshape their identity as they migrate through shifting contexts. She recalls that her ancestors, with a vision of a better future, migrated from a hilly village in Nepal to Kathmandu four generation ago, pursued higher education, changed their ancestral occupation, gradually build a modern house on flat land and settled in the city. Some elements of the native culture have, however, remained tightly within her and constitute her ethnic identity. She cherishes them, she explains, in her life. "You know," she says, "even if we wanted to leave our ethnic identity, it would never leave us. Identity is a big thing. You can change your dress, you can change your job, but some part of your identity is attached to your soul and to your genes. You carry your face that reminds you and every other person



who is looking at you about your root. You know, even if you change your face by doing plastic surgery on it, your genes will carry your root to your children.”

If ethnicity is observable from people’s physical features which have been passed on generation after generation, she argues, then it is best for people to learn about and understand where their ethnic features come from and the native culture they are carrying. Ashshin reports that Mini, despite being a New Zealand citizen by birth, has to answer questions about her roots repeatedly; facial features carry a testimony of the genes she carries from her parents. So Ashshin is preparing her daughter to proudly answer that she has a Nepali origin. She is supporting Mini to understand where they come from, and what their roots are.

She reflects that *where are you from* is a common question immigrants get and with time they become habituated to answer it. Ashshin reports she stopped feeling offended when she saw that her child gets this sort of questions. She rationalises: “since New Zealand is still in its growing stage in terms of multiculturalism, getting these questions is very usual for an immigrant. I think people feel that asking these kinds of questions is normal in Christchurch.” However, she adds that perhaps immigrants in a more multicultural society face fewer questions: “I’ve heard from a few family members living in California that their society doesn’t really care about from where the people come. Compared to those multicultural cities, Christchurch is still young to grow. Here people often do not see many faces like ours. So they get confused.” Ashshin tends to be tolerant of the attitude in Christchurch. Like several other participants in this study, she reflects that Christchurch is slowly growing towards multicultural awareness and it seems she is prepared to support that growth by being open about her own identity within the wider Christchurch community. “Now I see, it is quite normal for people to ask about our country of origin,” she says, “Now I can understand, but at the beginning, I felt uncomfortable to answer.” But some residue of discomfort seems to remain. She talks about the “silly questions” some people ask and suggests that perhaps people in Christchurch need to learn more about the cultures that have come into their community, that they need to “read books”, “see documentaries” and “travel”. As I reflect on her words, it seems that Ashshin is highlighting that multiculturalism is more complex than the presence of different cultures: it is perhaps about the degree to which a community avoids *normalising* one culture and seeing the others as outsiders. The concept of *othering*, of how a dominant culture *others* those that are different and thus makes them alien and not normal was presented by Said (1978; 1985) in his analysis of how the West views the East. More

recently the concepts of *normalising* and *othering* have been variously addressed in explorations of multiculturalism (for example, Ang, 1996; Hahl & Löfström, 2016; Babaii, 2018).

Ashshin mentions another reason that motivates her to teach her child about her native culture: the social pressures she gets from the Nepali community. She recalls ironically that in Kathmandu good parenting was assessed in terms of providing for children's English language development and understanding of English culture. Now, as a migrant, she is judged by others from Kathmandu by the extent she keeps Nepali culture alive in her children. She notes that, although migrant parents do not get the opportunity to offer their children a social environment to learn their native culture, they sometimes get criticism for their children's lack of cultural knowledge. She reflects even in their native land many children lack knowledge of their culture, but migrant parents get the blame if their children fail to learn about their ancestral culture. She articulates a sense of pride in successfully transmitting the significant aspects of her native culture to her daughter.

Ashshin repeatedly mentions that she admires her “modernised city Kathmandu”. She sees urbanisation as growth. However, she affirms that she has preserved some traditional practice of her native culture all through her life, and is passing them on to her daughter, particularly language, food, festivals, parenting strategies and relationship values. Throughout her discussion, it is evident that she carefully navigates the complexity of maintaining and transmitting what she sees as the essentials of her native culture while encouraging her daughter to become a part of the country she has been born into.

### **Developing competence in two languages**

Language is one area for considered navigation. Nepal has many languages. Ashshin mentions Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Tamang, Nepal Bhasa, Bajjika, Magar, Doteli, Urdu and Sunwarthan amongst the variety of languages. The official language is Nepali. Ashshin explains she is trying to pass the official language to Mini. She talks about how important for her to keep the home language alive in her child. It is necessary for Mini to learn Nepali, she states, for her social interaction with the people with whom she shares the same heritage: she needs to survive now within the Nepali community and for the future when she makes her own family.

She explains that she and Bhadro talk in Nepali at home intentionally to increase Mini's vocabulary. There was no challenge to speaking Nepali at home when Mimi was in preschool, Ashshin relates, but since she started primary school her daughter has been getting more exposure to English from school and acquiring words in English for concepts that she does not have the words for in Nepali. Therefore, Mini has started to prefer speaking in English at home too. In the beginning, Ashshin did not notice. Gradually when the amount of English started to increase, both parents noticed and stopped replying to questions in English. They also continuously informed Mini that she needs to talk in Nepali to get any answer. Eventually, Mini understood, Ashshin reports, and with regular practice, she is now fluent in Nepali.

Ashshin talks about the means to teach Mini to read and write in Nepali. The family is a part of a strongly bonded Nepali community in Christchurch. The community runs language classes for the children with teacher volunteers. Currently, eight children of the same age group go to a fortnightly Nepali class. Mini has an attachment to the children in her class and it is one of the attractions for her to attend. "It is precious," Ashshin says, "to see a bunch of children gossiping and playing in Nepali". Most weekends the community gathers in one place and Mini gets a chance to have regular interaction with Nepali people and culture. Mini is also learning Nepali folk dance from a professional Nepali dance teacher. Ashshin acknowledges the importance of belongingness in the community.

In earlier interviews, Mini was a pre-schooler and Ashshin found it difficult to feed Mini after preschool and take her to the Nepali language class. But now the timing of the class has changed and Mini has started primary school as well, so she is now a regular student in the class and progressing well.

In addition, Ashshin has brought books to teach Mini the Nepali language. Besides the language school, the mother-daughter reading time supports Mini to become comfortable with the language. Ashshin also reports the use of audio-visual materials available on the web and video conferencing with Mini's grandparents in Nepal. These activities, she says, help her daughter to learn aspects of the culture as well as practise the language.

Ashshin acknowledges her thankfulness to Mini's school for her English language development. She recounts that Mini's English acquisition started from preschool. Mini started preschool at the age of three and till then she only spoke Nepali. Ashshin was quite worried, she recalls. On the first day, during a tour of the school, Ashshin explained

everything in Nepali. “I was more nervous,” she says, “than Mini about how she is going to cope in a completely new environment; new language, new people, new rules.” However, she notes, Mini picked up everything quickly, and within a short time, Mini could speak in English fluently.

Sometimes Mimi mixes up English and Nepali while talking, Ashshin says. She notes that the inclusion of English words in Nepali is not unusual; she gives a list of English words she used from her childhood. She reflects that it is the same process for many languages all over the world: because of urbanisation and globalisation, English words are almost invisibly present inside many languages. “No language is unique, sacred or pure!” she exclaims. “Language is a man-made thing; how can it be pure when people’s mind changes all the time? So mixing up languages is just a part of evolution I suppose. Or you may say, these children are creating a language which is understandable for their reality.”

She confides that she does not expect Mini to talk and write as like her parents; she will be happy if Mini can learn the basics. She reflects that Mini is talking in Nepali mainly with her parents and with the members of the Nepali community and that is not enough to make a language accurate. In Kathmandu her family was in the majority group; everywhere people were speaking in Nepali, with radio and television broadcasting Nepali programmes, there a child would grow up in a Nepali environment. “But here,” she says, “we are a minority and that environment we’ll never get. We don’t even expect that.” Hence, Ashshin wishes to pass on enough language to Mini so that she can at least communicate when she goes back to Nepal, and perhaps to develop a future relationship with a Nepali man. Ashshin is proud that her daughter speaks Nepali.

She is also very proud of Mini’s Kiwi accent in English. She readily shows her excitement about Mini’s fluency and her lack of an immigrant’s accent. She praises her daughter’s bilingualism and considers that the language skills made her smarter than her monolingual cousins in Nepal. Mini’s bilingual skills also have a social aspect, Ashshin says. Her daughter can quickly analyse a social situation and make a decision about which language to speak: she knows with whom to speak in English and in Nepali. Ashshin says this skill developed naturally. Cho (2010) in her study of Chinese migrants reported the advantage of children who are skilled in their heritage language, in addition to English, in terms of personal and sociocultural benefits. Her study found they have greater understanding and knowledge of cultural values, ethics, and manners and they are intensely connected to their ethnic group.

Several times Ashshin talks about Mini's separate accent for both languages. The phrasing and intonation are different from her parents. She reports she is happy to hear her daughter speak English free from a Nepali accent and not unhappy to hear an English accent in her Nepali. She accepts Nepali language proficiency to decrease for a second generation migrant. Research supports her expectation. For instance, Hulsén, De Bot and Weltens (2002) studied language maintenance and language shift of three generations of Dutch migrants in New Zealand and found that first language skills decrease with each generation. They also found that limited contact with the native first language results in a shift in the way that language is spoken.

### **Teaching values: tradition and shifts**

Ashshin asserts that a child's culture and values mostly depend on the parents. She wants her daughter to learn and grow with all the socially acceptable values that will help her to fit into both Nepal and New Zealand, and she explains that she, therefore, tries to practice them herself as a role model. She says that because she was a city girl from Kathmandu, the way of living in Christchurch was not much of a culture shock to her. However, there are still some differences she identifies in terms of social values.

She respects the values she has brought with, she wishes to teach some of her native values to her daughter. She also accepts the manners and customs of Christchurch, and she actively brings some of those into her family. She expects her daughter to have the openness to receive new ideas and have more experience compared to her cousins in Nepal. For instance, she talks about dress and appearances, stating, "Anyone's values and manners reflect through clothing. Every culture has its own clothing style and expectation. But clothing should change with the change of place." Ashshin argues that immigrants should not wear their original country's dress on an everyday basis. She says, "As immigrants, our face is enough to let everyone know that we are different, we do not need to wear a different dress to make ourselves separate." Ashshin herself wore clothes suitable to the city before migration, and so does not expect her daughter to wear Nepali dress in Christchurch.

Ashshin says she is happy for her daughter to embrace western appearances. She expects Mini to wear western clothes like any other growing Kiwi girl. Nepali dresses are more like a costume to Mini and Mini enjoys dressing up in them for different festive occasions. The costumes make her feel special on those days. She says, "I never had a problem to convince

her to wear those costumes. But those are for special days only. I am very comfortable to see her in western dress and it should be fine if she wears a dress like another Kiwi girl when she grows up. I have no taboo with western dress or any short dress for my daughter.” She acknowledges that she might have influenced Mini to wear a more traditional dress if they had decided to go back and settle in Nepal, but the family has decided to live here.

In contrast, Ashshin reports her determination to hold on to some of her native cultural values and pass them on to Mini. She talks about child rearing. She shares that when Mini was very young she used to cry a lot, and the Plunket nurse told her it was because Mini slept with her mother. Ashshin recounts that she was not happy with the advice and did not send her daughter to a separate room. Mini slept with her parents until the age of six and still irregularly sleeps with them in an attached bed. Ashshin explains that this is a very basic demand of eastern mothers. Seymour (as cited in Paiva, 2008) also acknowledged that longer-term breastfeeding and sleeping with the child is commonly found in non-western parents.

Ashshin’s expectation for Mini’s marriage is also traditional. Ashshin generalises South Asian parents’ desire and says that like other mothers from this region, she would love to see her daughter get married to a man from the same country. Berry (2001) and DeSouza (2010) also acknowledged the importance of marriage culture amongst South Asian migrants. Ashshin suggests this attitude is inbuilt with South Asians’ process of transferring and preserving family culture. She explains, “For South Asians, marriage does not happen between two people; it rather bonds both of their family. So we feel more comfortable to deal with our own cultural people while building a family tie.” She wants that for Mini. However, she also acknowledges that it is possible for Mini to choose a person from a different culture since she is growing up in New Zealand. If she does, Ashshin says, her parents would be disappointed but eventually they would accept their daughter’s choice. However, she insets an intimate relationship before marriage is not something she is prepared to accept.

### **Festivals and foods**

Ashshin reports that she and her family celebrate various festivals over the year, some traditional Nepali and some not. Ashshin talks about Deepavali or Diwali. She states, “It is one of the biggest multicultural festivals celebrated in Christchurch organised by the Indian community.” They attend grand stage programmes every year and enjoy performances by

many cultural groups, prominently Indian. To Mini, fireworks and home decorations are the most attractive part of Deepavali. Ashshin also celebrates Dashain and Teej. Dashain is the main religious and cultural festival for her family. It is one of the biggest festivals for the Nepali Hindus and In Christchurch, the community arranges a fair named *Dashain Mela* to celebrate. Ashshin's personal favourite is the Teej: Nepali women sing, and dance, wear traditional dress, fast for a day and then eat mouth-watering foods. In every celebration, they join in various activities organised by the Nepali community.

Ashshin recounts that many of her friends have faced trouble in taking leave from work to celebrate their native festival. Ashshin praises her workplace. Since the organisation works with migrants and refugees, its policy is supportive of the needs and rights of immigrants. It gives appreciative attention to the values of every migrant, she says: everyone gets paid leave from work to celebrate their biggest native festivals. She notes that this is different from her previous workplaces. She says she has a loving work community and she enjoys her job. Bhadro usually takes annual leave to celebrate the festivals and is happy that his organisation accommodates him.

Besides their native festivals, the family also enjoys celebrating the festivals of Christchurch such as Christmas, Mothers Day, Fathers Day, Easter and Halloween. Ashshin says, "We do not mix festivals with religion or ethnicity. Festivals are for enjoyment." Regardless of the religious background, the family receives festivals as a source of enjoyment, celebration, family time, socialisation and food. At Christmas, they do not go to a church but they do exchange gifts, decorate a Christmas tree, hold a barbeque, go to a park or go swimming.

Ashshin reports that throughout December Mini is excited: every day she shares happy stories of her Christmas activities at school. At the end of year function, Mini sings Christmas carol on the school stage with her friends, her parents always enjoying their child performing in front of the whole school.

Ashshin relates that her dinner table welcomes western foods on some nights. Besides traditional Nepali dinners of rice, curry and lentils, she sometimes serves steamed vegetables, baked meat, mashed potato, pasta and salad. She reflects that her family does not eat as much spicy food as other South Asians. Since she is not a fan of heat in food, she uses less chilli to prepare mild or moderate hot food and this is the main reason, she says, why Mini eats both styles of the foods comfortably. She reports that Mini has always brought her food from home, first to preschool and now to school. She avoided a preschool that provides food

because she did not think it was healthy to send their daughter there. She thinks it helped Mini to receive both cuisines equally and reflects that perhaps children who spend most of the time to preschool and eat food provided by the school do not like their own home foods with traditional spices.

### **Avoiding some aspects of the culture of origin**

Ashshin talks about what she sees as the ugly truths of her home culture that she is determined to avoid in Christchurch. She states that South Asian society is a male-dominated society: “Our countries are much more male-dominated than the western countries. The decision makers are always men. Whether you are in your home or out, you have to face male chauvinism.” She asserts that girls face discrimination on the basis of sex in their everyday life in Nepal, from home to school to work. She acknowledges that migration gave her the opportunity to avoid this practice in her family. In Christchurch, she has observed the culture of respecting the opinions of both males and females equally. She reports she and her husband discuss how to make changes in their attitude and work on their approach every day to develop a respectful partnership in their regular life.

In their house, her husband has access to the kitchen which uncommon in Ashshin’s family in her native context. Although she is the head chef in her kitchen, Bhadro supports her while cooking and he also cooks sometimes. Both of them do the groceries; both work to earn money. Both are trying to take care of their child equally. She suggests she and Bhadro do not have the kind of role hierarchy inside their home that their parents have in Nepal. She reflects that Mini is always watching and can see her mother as an independent woman and is learning from her parents’ partnership. Rolls and Chamberlain (2004) found in their study in an Australian context that immigration benefits Nepali women by offering work opportunities which make them more independent and confident participants in their family’s decision making.

Another aspect of her culture that Ashshin wants to bypass is the rigidity of religion. She explains that though they are Hindu by birth, her family is liberal in terms of religion. They spontaneously celebrate different cultural and religious festivals which are not connected to their religion. They occasionally worship but it is not a part of their everyday practice and they do not follow all the traditional rules and customs. And so, Ashshin explains, she does not want Mini to develop blind religious beliefs or to follow every rule of the ideology of



Hinduism. The rituals in any festival, she says, are simply a part of the celebration. She explains her family does not have any religious book, a picture of a goddess or any religious material in their home: they avoid all the “exaggeration of religious belief”, she says, and are trying to teach Mini to develop the same attitudes.

Ashshin discusses the way that senior people’s words are treated as the ultimate truth in Nepal. She explains that she does not disrespect the experience of elderly people but she gives more importance to the knowledge that science is bringing. She does not want her daughter to grow with this lowly attitude towards elders. She is teaching Mini that whatever is right will always right. She asserts that if anyone says or does anything wrong, Mini has the right to correct it. “Mini should count on the knowledge of a person rather than the age,” she says. “We give freedom to Mini to receive the ideas from any person if the ideas are right.”

She explains that she tells her daughter that science and proven knowledge is the right place to get answers to inquiries, not an elderly person. And if Mini gets false information from any person she should freely defend her own voice. She states that in her native culture people often rebuke a person who gives her opinion, especially if that person is a woman. She affirms that she does not see the idea of “expressing an opinion” is the same as showing arrogance or shamelessness. She appreciates that the way she has learnt in Christchurch of expressing her opinion is polite and honest, and she would like to see her daughter being always honest in expressing her opinion.

### **Co-operative school environment**

Ashshin praises the teachers’ attitude in seeking to create a multicultural classroom. She acknowledges that she found it unexpected that teachers always told Mini to keep practising her language at home. It was also helpful because Mini follows her teachers’ instruction keenly and the teacher’s attitude was comforting for her too as a migrant parent. Giving the example of how the Nepali flag was included in the classroom, Ashshin asserts that the teachers in the school are open to receive migrant parents’ and students comments. Every month, she further states, they organise a cultural day for each successive country to teach aspects of the culture of that country. Teachers in Mini’s preschool, she adds, also taught the students to make greetings according to different cultures, such as in Nepali, Samoan, Indian, and in Chinese. She recalls the celebration of Diwali at preschool: Mini was proud on that

day and she felt privileged to share her festival with her friends, which made her understand that her festivals are important too within the community.

Ashshin discusses the yearly multicultural week in Mini's current school. Cultural performances in the school auditorium, displays of ethnic materials on class walls, costume day, shared meals to taste various cultural foods are some example of activities. It is a fun week for all the students and Mini enjoys it. Ashshin appreciates that the City Council arranges some multicultural events, such as the Christchurch Lantern Festival, Noodles Festival, Cultural Galore, Holi, Diwali, Japan day celebration and various programmes during the Christmas holidays and that the school's teachers often inform students about these events. However, compared to the preschool, she says, there are limited activities in Mini's primary school. Ashshin argues that classrooms at primary level do not recognise multiple cultures. She says that classes are very engaged with activities that address the bicultural relationship and that teachers use Māori language in many classroom interactions. While she acknowledges that the school is trying to let enjoy activities that come with multicultural populations she argues that it is not getting involved with teaching about cultural diversity. She does not criticise but says, "It is what it is! We cannot change it or expect to change. It is their country, what we are getting is the maximum for now I think."

### **Experience as a *brown* migrant**

Ashshin affirms, "Christchurch has a positive attitude towards migrants." She gives an example of her experience: In 2015, after the severe earthquake in Nepal, Ashshin's workplace supported her with four days paid leave to stay at home and settle her mind. The organisation where Bhadro works supported him with an airfare to visit home. Ashshin reflects that as Christchurch survived a series of devastating earthquakes, people feel and show empathy for them. She acknowledges the support she and her husband are getting from their workplaces and she asserts that most of the people of Christchurch have a positive attitude towards migrants.

However, Ashshin also states that it can be difficult for first generation migrants from a non-English background to make friends in this new land, especially straight after arrival. She recalls her experience when she first arrived as a student. Communication with her family was then not easy; she could only afford to make a phone call to her parents once a week. She

used to feel very lonely and was in need of friends. But making new friends with the people who were still foreign to her at that time was very difficult.

Ashshin recounts: “Back then, I felt like something was blocking me from making new friends.” She offers reasons: she stood out from the local students in her class who shared a similar background in terms of language, schooling, history, sociocultural factors. Many of those students knew each other from previous levels of education or from other connections. She was the only Nepali student in her class and she felt those students were not warm towards her different identity. She felt separate from them and did not know how to step into a zone where they felt comfortable. She assumes that because of language, culture and value differences it becomes difficult to make friends with a foreigner. She notes that people from different countries came into the classroom as well as the locals, but mostly they did not socialise much outside the university. They stayed in groups with similar countries, cultures, language or values. After observing the unwritten rules of grouping in the class, she reports, she chooses to become a friend of “other brown students”.

She recalls that it took a long time for her to build a relationship with her teachers as well. Her teachers were supportive, but in the beginning, it was very difficult to understand their instruction in class. The accent of English was unknown and they talked too fast for her listening capacity and she felt lost. Li, Baker, and Marshall (2001) found in their research that Asian tertiary students face difficulty while adjusting to teachers and local students in terms of learning and sociocultural adaptation, primarily due to their language gap. They recommended that both teachers and international students need to improve their cultural awareness and intercultural communication skills to meet the challenges.

She reports that in the current workplace, it has been much more comfortable to engage with multicultural people and she has built a comfortable relationship with many of her local colleagues. But the people who she can count as friends are mostly migrants: some are Nepali community members, some are her South Asian international students from her University, and some are South Asian parents from Mini’s school. Ashshin suggests that people from South Asian countries develop a homogenous cluster as migrants and most of the time they feel comfortable with each other. However, she notes that it is not a fact in Mini’s life. She has been observing that her daughter has close friends from various ethnicities and many of them are Kiwis. She reflects that since Mini and all her friends have lived their childhood where they are building their history together, sharing their joys and crying, and developing a

strong and deep bond. Hence, she states, the struggle for making friends may be relevant for the first generation adult migrants, but not for the children of those immigrants.

From Ashshin's experience, the people who have visited South Asian countries are easier to associate with, rather than those who have never gone out of Christchurch. She gently criticises the ways people ask migrants inappropriate questions. She states, "Although, now people are living in the world of internet and all knowledge is searchable in our palm, still a lot of people hold various misleading ideas about us."

She shares some examples of the awkward questions and comments she has heard from people, noting that they come from a lack of knowledge and practical experience. She admits it is true from the migrants' side too. She states that she has heard many inappropriate questions and comments about the indigenous Māori culture from migrants. In her early days of migration, she also had various inquiries in her mind. The culture was barely known to her. But she kept herself controlled and did not ask questions she thought might be embarrassing and looked for the answers in books. Now the time has made her more experienced, she says, and she has learnt a lot. She is hopeful that in time local people will also develop awareness, that time will make people less hesitant to accept diversity.

### **The Treaty partnership**

Ashshin recounts that she was introduced as a postgraduate student to New Zealand's history, the Treaty of Waitangi, and the relationship between indigenous Māori and Pākehā. She acknowledges that the Treaty has been an extremely significant document for the formation of New Zealand and its principles get importance in every sector of work in modern New Zealand. She also states that the Treaty signifies the cultural identity of this country and it gets the most attention in New Zealand's history of colonisation. However, she adds that whatever she has theoretically learnt in her Māori resource management course during her Master's degree has yet to be applied in practical life. She notes that for a long time the dominance of Pākehā created obstacles in Māori people's educational development. By giving the example of her Māori friend, she claims the lack of Māori generations in higher education is one of the reasons behind their current gap.

Ashshin acknowledges that she has not learned the history in depth and has never felt the necessity of it knowing it; general information is enough for a migrant to survive. She considers her current knowledge is sufficient for her living in New Zealand. She again puts

emphasis on experience: with general knowledge of the history of the new land, she says, a migrant can start surviving and later on that person may learn more if required.

### **Teasing out key threads**

In Ashshin's account, two complexly interconnected elements stand out: an emphatic assertion of the importance of knowing one's roots and a realistically practical commitment to adapting herself and her daughter to the overall lifestyle, opportunities and constraints of being an immigrant into a new country. She asserts that altering her identity would not have been possible because of her accent, gesture, body features and colour. Moreover, she is proud to be Nepali. Nevertheless, she acknowledges that the future for her family is in New Zealand where they are now citizens and so she is happy to accept changes. She accepts her daughter will speak Nepali with a Kiwi accent and she is proud that her English has no traces of an immigrant's accent. She is comfortable with Kiwi styles of clothing and bringing Kiwi style food to her dinner table. She recognises that she values certain aspects of her life in Christchurch. It is possible her family free from blind adherence to religion. Her role as a woman, and her daughter's future role, is one of equality, and she and her husband are evolving a partnership based on equality. Obedience to the opinions of older people is not expected. She also is generally satisfied with the attitudes of her daughter's teachers and is appreciative of the support of her workplace.

However, she is also determined to sustain certain aspects of her original culture: with the help of community classes she is teaching her daughter to speak and read Nepali; she celebrates festivals; she holds fast to the way her original culture approaches breastfeeding and children sleeping with their parents, strongly wishes to have a Nepali son-in-law and is uncompromisingly firm that her daughter should not have an intimate relationship before her marriage.

I have described these two elements of Ashshin's narrative as interrelated because she herself talks about them in terms of fitting together: she sees her daughter growing up as a fully grounded Kiwi who has roots in the culture of Nepal.

However, the fit has some complexities. Ashshin describes her initial loneliness in the postgraduate student community and how she found herself gravitating to the brown faces in the community. Her continuing affiliation with the brown faces in Christchurch is suggested by her repeated references to the way "we South Asians" do things and her close relationship

with the Nepali community. On the one hand, the sense of belonging to first a Nepali and then a wider South Asian group gives her understanding, support and strength; on the other, it is a sign of some separation from what she describes as the Kiwi community. A sense of separation is suggested in the way she notes questions about her own background and the history of her country as “awkward”. To an extent she is prepared to shrug off the sense of being “othered”: she says, “these questions are all right to get from Kiwis as they have fewer migrants.” Nevertheless, she shows her discomfort when she suggests Kiwis should be more active in searching for information about other countries and other cultures and should travel to get more experience. As I have indicated above, Ashshin’s narrative raises questions about the kind of multiculturalism that is developing in New Zealand. Is the presence of many different ethnicities enough to describe a society as multicultural? Is the absence of overt racism and discrimination against migrants enough to suggest that a society recognises its multiculturalism? Is it possible to claim to be multicultural if the difference from those who see themselves as the mainstream is continuously marked? These questions have important implications for Mini’s future and for schooling in New Zealand and are further discussed in Chapter Eleven.

Ashshin argues that while schools celebrate the surface features of different cultures, such as festivals, they are doing little to teach about the values and histories of the various cultures of migrants. She partially justifies this by noting that many migrants are not learning much about the history of New Zealand, and in particular about the place of Māori and the Treaty of Waitangi. She suggests that it is perhaps to be expected that first generation immigrants will have only a little knowledge in of such matters, only even help them to survive, because it is not their history. She expresses the hope that the second generation, which is growing up in New Zealand, will learn much more as it is a part of their own history. Her perception of the relevance to various generations of immigrants of New Zealand’s history and of the position of Māori as tangata whenua also has significant implications of schooling and these too are discussed in Chapter Eleven.

## Chapter Eight: Zuleikha



*Zuleikha Hassin is a postgrad student in New Zealand originally from Punjab, Pakistan. She has been living in Christchurch accompanied by her husband Muhammad Yusuf and their three children. The couple has two girls, Faiza, aged eleven and Anaya aged eight and a ten years old boy, Arshan. Both Zuleikha and Yusuf are thirty-seven years old and the family has resided in Christchurch for the last five years. Zuleikha has been awarded a scholarship from her country and is a full-time student. Yusuf came in New Zealand with a dependent work visa. After two years of living in Christchurch, with his job experience, they applied for the residency with the support of an immigration lawyer, and they got residency.*

### Preserving religion

Parenting a very... very difficult job! We never realise before their birth what sort of duty and responsibility would come with a child. Even when they born, we do not become conscious about those changes we need to do further in our life. And with time people see changes in each and every little thing in their life. When people said,

“we are not yet ready for a baby”, before having my children, I thought that it is just an excuse. How can a person not be ready for a baby? A baby is a tiny thing! How much will it need? But after having my children, now I can tell you, it is a huge job! No other job is comparable with parenting. And for the mothers, responsibilities are more difficult.

This is a temporary place for us. I have planned to settle in the Middle Eastern countries. To be specific, my ambition is to go to Saudi Arabia for my religion. To me, New Zealand is a place for developing our family well enough to get a good job over in Saudi Arabia and settle over there. We are Muslims and my full concentration is to rear my children only in the way of Islam. This practice would help them in our next settlement and also have an expected afterlife. I always teach them about what is the right way of sitting in Islam, what is the right way of eating in Islam and so on. I cannot find much of Pakistan in our activities, it is fully Islam-centred.

My focus has been changed ever since we migrated and arrived in here. If I was living in my own country, people around me would be living with the same identity, the same culture, mostly the same religion. So it is common. To identify my own self inside Pakistan, I would say I am a Punjabi<sup>28</sup> inside Pakistan. But ever since I arrived here, now my identity is not Punjabi, because the people around me are not Pakistanis. My Punjabi ethnicity is not enough for my cultural identity here. Here my identity is a Muslim and after that a Pakistani Muslim.

Islam is not the only aspect of the cultural identity in my own country. In my observation, at least 50-60% of my country culture is based on religion. Hence, I can say that only Islam is not all of the Pakistani cultures, but for my family in Christchurch, it has become the major aspect. We need to take care of every small bit when we are teaching our religion in a non-Islamic environment. For instance, I had to set an alarm for Azan in my mobile intentionally five times a day. Otherwise, my kids will never understand what Azan is! If now we think that because we are in this non-

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<sup>28</sup> Punjabi are the people who have their ancestral history related to the geographical region of Punjab situated in of both India and Pakistan. In Zuleikha's account she is acclaiming her originality in relation to the Punjab, Pakistan



Islamic country we need to adopt the culture of this country, and later on, expect my kids to be good Muslims- I don't think it is going to happen.

I am their parent. They were inside my womb. I definitely know what will be best for my children, and who will be best for them as their life partner. And I am pretty hopeful that we will choose the husbands for our daughters and the wife for our son. They will have a grand wedding like us. A life partner without marriage is out of the question here! My children's spouses need to be very good Muslims. Pakistani or not Pakistani doesn't matter to me.

I always wear a hijab<sup>29</sup>. My girls will eventually do so. But the time is yet to come. There are people who make their children wear a hijab from the age of 2 or 3. I never wanted it in my children. I feel there are lots of important things to learn before wearing a headscarf. If my children do not understand why the hijab is important, what is the reason behind wearing it, what is our prophet's directive for covering ourselves and why he has given this directive, it will never be fruitful for them. When they will reach the appropriate age for starting a headscarf - I mean, when they will turn twelve, they will start wearing it. Before that, I am teaching them to understand the philosophy behind it.

I am not expecting my girls to wear salwar-kameez<sup>30</sup> as other girls wear in Pakistan. I am not trying to suppress them. I am trying to keep an equal level with religion and modernity. But I would never allow my girls to wear any of the uncovered dresses like those their friends may wear!

I can understand that sometimes my children may feel a lot of disappointment when I reject their demand for different shiny wrapped snacks and chocolates. But I have no choice. I have to be strict on them to teach eating halal. It is for their betterment. I cannot let my children do sin and be punished in their afterlife; I simply cannot!

Festivals other than religious ones are not important to celebrate for my family. As I said before, I am not living in Pakistan, and I want my children to be recognised as

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<sup>29</sup> Hijab refers to a modest covering of the head. The style differs according to local custom.

<sup>30</sup> Traditional dress for women that contains three parts: a long top, a pair of trousers and a scarf all matched together. It is popular in different places of South Asia

good Muslims only. So, for me, there is no point to celebrate other Pakistani festivals in my family. If they can celebrate the religious festivals with their devoted mind and honour, that is enough for me. The other festivals are significant to our locality, but when my children are not growing in that locality I don't find it important for them. To me, my children are only carrying their religion. So religious festivals are important.

In Pakistan, whether it is my parents' house or in my in-law's house, lots of people would visit us on every Eid. It gets a festive outlook when a lot of people would come to your home; it feels like you are celebrating! But here you don't have them. So by going to the community get-together, you may get those feelings of the festival. It is more like an imitation fake jewellery compare to gold, but at least you have that to wear!

I really miss my maids. Here I need to do all by myself, cooking, cleaning, washing, dusting, taking care of children. But there, I always had at least two housemaids who supported my household. Here, I am always in a rush and it sucks out the fun part of any celebration. My husband and children help me but I have to do most of the work. After all, I am a mother and it is women's duty to take care of these house jobs. Even my children's lifestyles also have been changed because of not having any helping hand to help them with their work. Even my youngest one is taking care of her own stuff from the age of five which is absurd in my home context. Having a housemaid here is unthinkable! If I think of a housekeeper here it may even cost me more than our income! These sort of services are so very expensive here.

We almost lost our Punjabi language to keep our Urdu! It is our fault that we could not give it to our children. In Punjab, if your kids are speaking Urdu from their childhood people will consider they belong to a very good family. And if the kids are talking in Punjabi people will think that these kids don't belong to a very educated family. When we left Punjab, we gradually realised how much loss we caused them. Now they do not have their mother tongue.

They have almost lost a language which is very special to us. And we feel guilty for that. They cannot read or write and even cannot speak in Punjabi. They can understand only when we speak slowly, but cannot speak, but I don't know how long

it will last. Here nobody speaks Punjabi. From where will they learn? Maybe someday we'll be able to teach them Punjabi. I don't know how! We'll try our best to do it.

They are learning to read the Quran in Arabic. We'll teach the *Hadis*<sup>31</sup> in Urdu. Urdu is our own language; it is easier for me to explain the verses of Hadis to my children as it is more easily understandable for me. They need to understand it by heart. I don't want it to be in English. Urdu is originally an Islamic language; English is not. What I mean is it is the language of the people of an Islamic country, so religious manners are inbuilt practice in this language.

In Pakistan when a boy will grow, he would definitely know that he is the preferred one. Male chauvinism is present in every level of Pakistani society. I don't want that to happen in my family and I know that I can apply my rules here. Everything is so easy here. Here, whatever you want to do, you can do; nobody bothers. But in Pakistan, everybody will show anxiety to stop you even if you are not doing anything! People are so nosy about others' affairs. So I am sure my daughters will be strongly criticised for their attitude of gender equity if they would go back to that rigid society where nobody accepts any positive change easily. However, I just want to give them a better life at least in my home with equal favour to each.

We are better parents here; our children are learning the best from us. Dealing with a lot of people in the same place was a distraction in teaching anything to my children. But here we are concentrating more on our children. When they come back from school they always find one of us at home waiting for them. So we have more interaction with our children. We can see the result very well. I feel proud of them growing up practising Islam suitably. Whenever they start eating, they say "*Bismillahi wa ala barakatillah*"<sup>32</sup>. And then they say, "*Jazakallah*"<sup>33</sup>. I love them when they do these things. All of these proactive attitudes are developed here.

I am tough with them to have a better future. It is for their good. Whenever my kids make a mess or make an argument about my orders, I do become harsh with them.

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<sup>31</sup> Hadis or Hadith is a collection of the words of the prophet Muhammad. A very important source of guidance for Muslims apart from the Quran.

<sup>32</sup> Prayer before eating or drinking for Muslims which means, "With the blessings of Allah I begin".

<sup>33</sup> Expression of gratitude in an Islamic tradition.

Mothers should be strict in teaching discipline to their children. Otherwise, they will never learn what is good or bad, what is acceptable in society.

I don't expect any support from the schools to teach my culture and religion to my children. I think schools are the place for academic development only. If schools get involved with cultural activities, they might select some of the major cultures. Then other cultural children will feel inferior and left out. So I feel the school should not do any cultural activity. It is better to focus on the educational activity at school. What the schools are doing now, I have no comments on that, but I do not expect it to increase. I want my children to get better academic achievement from school, not cultural.

My children are not having any trouble at school. I don't know what will happen when the girls would start wearing hijab. I do not want to make any preconceptions. We do not know the future. The unwanted things that happened with other people might or might not happen with my daughters. If I have a preconception that other students are bad and they will not accept our religious identity, I would put that poison in my children's thought too. So let's see what happens in future; then we will deal with it.

Nobody will find any place without racism. Maybe the ways of doing racism are different in each country. It is a part of human nature to give different status to different people. So before even coming into a place, we begin expecting that we will face racism. But I do not want to see 'differentiation' as 'racism'. My thinking is that since I am an outsider in this society, I may initially interpret many actions which are not done with any bad intention as racism. It is very common for immigrants to predict things when they come into a new society. We have faced real racism in the USA. But in Christchurch, it didn't happen to us yet, thanks to Allah!

I like the society of Christchurch. My observation of the people of this place is that they still preserve family values and they are respectful in their attitude. I haven't seen it much in the USA. This society is much more conservative than the USA. The USA has a much more, so-called, free society. I don't like that society. There should be some rules and regulations within the family. I have seen it here. I really like it.

Sometimes I feel that they don't want to tolerate each other. I have seen the whites treating the Māori people as uneducated and inferior to them. Parents in my children's school practically advised me to guide my children for not making many Māori friends, because mostly their families are not well mannered and they are less educated. Although most of those parents are migrants. I am not guiding my children to choose their friends on the basis of ethnicity. But I always tell them: stay with those who are well behaved and sincere in education.

We don't know much about the history of this place; it is not important for us to know. But for children, I am letting the school teach everything regarding the history of this country. We do not have any objection to that. To stay a period of time here, they would need that knowledge.

### **Living in a place of transition**

A significant feature of Zuleikha's story is how she has constructed New Zealand as a transitional place. Although the family has applied for and obtained a residency visa that allows them to live in New Zealand they do not have any intention to live here permanently.

Zuleikha affirms that she and her husband see their residency as a means to build their academic and professional careers, obtain the well-reputed New Zealand passports and plan to eventually settle in a Middle Eastern Islamic country with a good and well-paid job.

### **Religion supersedes nationality**

Zuleikha repeatedly asserts that being a Muslim is the most important part of her human identity. She is a devout Muslim woman and wants to preserve every aspect of it in her children. In Pakistan, Islam was an integral part of her culture and there she did not need to take religion as the defining aspect of her cultural identity. But when she came to a foreign country, she gradually stopped giving emphasis to the other aspects of Pakistani culture. In her discussion, she distinguishes between *Pakistaniness* and *Muslimness* and repeatedly emphasises that she is embracing the second since migrating to New Zealand.

Zuleikha comes from the Punjab region of Pakistan. Inside her country, she showed her loyalty to the place Punjab, which is historically connected to her ancestors, and preferred her

identity of being a Punjabi. Abroad she wants to present herself as a Muslim. Now she recognises herself as a part of the world Muslim community and aims to perform all her religious duties accurately. She expects people will identify her as a Muslim, not by her Punjabi (regional) or Pakistani (national) identity.

Shaw (2014) found that Islamic values and traditions have been exclusively significant for immigrants from Pakistan. Indeed Zuleikha's epistemology appears wrapped in the ideology of Islam. It is variously recognised (for instance, Hitti, 1970) that Islam is often seen as more than religion, rather as a state and a distinct culture, and above all a total way of life. Zuleikha suggests that her children may learn about other aspects of their native cultures when they are older but need to receive and absorb religious practice from their very early age. She repeatedly states that to prepare her children as practising Muslims is her ultimate goal in parenting and that it is a difficult job in the social environment of Christchurch. "The way we dress, the way we eat, what we eat and drink, or the way we spend our lives with the aim of a better afterlife. In every aspect we Muslims are so different from other people living here!" she says.

She gives an example of how her family consciously select their food. As a Muslim mother, she has fear for her children growing up in a social environment where many of the available foods and beverages are strictly prohibited in Islam. She notes that children are not getting anything regarding their religion from their school whereas in Pakistan, or in many other Islamic countries that she knows, religion and religious practice are actively taught in the school. Schools in Pakistan, she says, would explicitly concentrate on teaching the pillars of Islam from the very beginning of the schooling. Children also learn to recite the Quran<sup>34</sup> in school. Since she now lives in a different non-Islamic context she fears that if she does not give stronger guidance to her children in the Islamic way of living they might not become practising Muslims. Therefore she teaches every micro-element of this total way of living, she says, so that it will imbue her children and they will not need continuous supervision.

Zuleikha offers an example of how she is teaching her children about *Azan*<sup>35</sup>. In an Islamic country like Pakistan, she says, people learn a lot of things related to Islam unconsciously. In Pakistan "Azan is always on the loudspeakers." Listening to Azan is a daily occurrence: it starts from the moment one comes out from mother's womb to the last breath. From the first

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<sup>34</sup> The central religious text of Islam.

<sup>35</sup> Azan is the call to ritual prayers from the mosque.

day of their lives, everyone hears it five times a day and knows every bit of it from the heart. There nobody needs to teach what Azan is to their children. However, in Christchurch, Zuleikha has to intentionally keep Azan on her cell phone to make her children habituated with it.

Zuleikha affirms that from dawn to dusk in every moment of the day her conscious motivation is supporting her children to learn and become accustomed to religious practices. Besides affective learning, she wants her children to develop cognitive awareness by knowing the reasons behind practices. She reports that they know that growing up as a Muslim child is going to be different from their friends and they are actively practising their Muslim identity. She states, “they never start eating without saying the *Bismillah*<sup>36</sup> and the mealtime prayer, because they know every meal is the *Rizq*<sup>37</sup> given by Allah and they need to thank him for that; they never drink water while they are standing because they know it will not be approved by Allah; they know which verses to recite while eating or drinking; why Fridays are important for us; why cutting nails is *Sunnah*<sup>38</sup> and so on. I am trying to make it habitual so that they will not do anything out of our religion even whenever they are out of our surrounding.” She notes that now the children are accustomed to Islamic practices and they maintain them outside their home environment: they are observant Muslims, and that makes them different from most of their friends at school.

Zuleikha explains that she keeps explaining to her children the reasons behind being a good Muslim in words easily understandable at their age, “Your life is like an exam paper. Today you are drinking water correctly, choosing dress appropriately, following *Sunnah*; this means you are having good marks. If you keep doing all of the good things, you will add good marks in your paper. And your marks will go high and you will get a good result.” She acknowledges that the first years of children's lives are very important and if anyone does not explain everything clearly, children will not be open to receive. She explains that it is important for them to understand everything as well as becoming habituated: that will make them good Muslims and not make obstacles in living a modern life.

Being religious guides many decision in Zuleikha's parenting. For example, she notes that she has trained her children not to talk after bedtime prayer. They know that if they talk at

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<sup>36</sup> “In the name of Allah”, an invocation used by Muslims at the beginning of an undertaking.

<sup>37</sup> The term *Rizq* is acknowledged by Muslims as the provision by Allah of food, wealth, family ties, spirituality, faith, intellect, health and everything else that are beneficial for a person.

<sup>38</sup> Needing to be done in a traditional way, following the ways of the prophet Muhammad

that time Allah will be unhappy and so they keep quiet. Zuleikha says that silence makes them fall asleep easily. She states, “I think bedtime stories or songs are not good for my children's religious development and it is also a waste of time; my children go to bed, pray and sleep.”

As I reflect on her bedtime practices, I note the difference from my own practices as a Muslim mother. I offer my son a bedtime story or a lullaby. I can remember how in my childhood my grandmother used to tell many Islamic stories of the prophets at my bedtime, especially the melodious *Hamd and Na'at*<sup>39</sup>, famous in the popular culture of my country. This underlines the diversity of experiences and worldviews that can exist within any religious movement. That my views and practices are different from those of Zuleikha may be because local historical experiences have determined aspects of the practice of Islam. The *Islamic way of parenting* may have some unified rules, but also has socio-culturally adaptations, and may depend on the individual who is practising as well as on local historical practices. Hence it would be inappropriate to anticipate the values of one Muslim parent by listening to other Muslims; the complexities and diversities that constitutes Islam are no different to the diversity of different beliefs within other religions. Shaw (2014) argued that, beside some basic ideas of the religion, there is no unified tradition of South Asian's practice of Islam, stating, “South Asian Islam, like Islam elsewhere, is characterized by a diversity of traditions, which is in large measure a response to the impact of colonial encounter and global processes” (p. 205). However Zuleikha's affirmation of the positive impact of her religious practice on her parenting is significant as Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar and Swank, (2001) identified that there is a lack of studies concentrating on the influence of non-western religious traditions such as Hinduism, Islam, Confucianism, and Buddhism on family and parenting.

All three children have been receiving online teaching for learning to read the Quran for the last four years. Every day except Sunday they have classes through Skype for thirty minutes in the evening and get a small task. The teacher has taught them *Namaz*<sup>40</sup> as well. Faiza and Arshan get up for Fajr<sup>41</sup> prayer. They pray five times daily. They also fast<sup>42</sup> in the month of

<sup>39</sup> Poetry concentrating on exclusive praise of Allah is referred as Hamd and the poems that are written to praise the Prophet Muhammad are Na'at in an Islamic culture. Often they are presented in melody.

<sup>40</sup> The ritual prayers mandatory in Islam. Also known as *Salah* or *Salat*.

<sup>41</sup> The first prayer in a day which is the dawn prayer.

<sup>42</sup> During the entire month of Ramadan of the Arabic calendar, Muslims are obligated to fast, every day from dawn to dusk. The fasting is also known as *Siyam/Sawm/Rozah*.



Ramadan, although it is not mandatory to fast in their age. She sends her boy with her husband whenever he goes to the mosque. Whenever Yusuf is free he goes to the mosque, otherwise, he prays at home. Zuleikha explains that it is good for them to do all these things to develop a habit. In Punjab, Zuleikha states, the mosque is a place to pray for men. She is keeping the tradition in Christchurch as well and most of the time Zuleikha and her girls pray at home. If occasionally she goes to the mosque, she takes her girls with her.

Zuleikha talked about the importance of her children marrying Muslims. She says, “My girls need to marry good Muslim men and my boy needs to marry a good Muslim girl.” Marriage is a mandatory social bond for a Muslim. Hence it is out of Zuleikha’s imagination that her children might not get married and make a family at the right time. She is not concerned about the nationality or ethnicity, but the person needs to be a well practising Muslim. She acknowledges she would appreciate it if she can choose the partners for their children. She states that parents arranging the marriage of their children is a very common tradition in Pakistani communities. The parents take it as their responsibility, right and honour to make the big decision of their child’s life. Zuleikha expects that she will get the same honour from her children as her parents got from her at the time of her marriage.

### **Appearances, food and festivals: prioritised to represent Muslim identity**

The appearance of the children is another of the major priorities of Zuleikha. She explains that she expects a well-mannered appearance, not showing skin and covering according to an Islamic standard. She reports that even her youngest daughter knew what she should wear from the age of five; she tells Anaya, “You can go out wearing your frocks till your knees with long socks and underwear” She also reports Faiza knows she cannot wear short dresses like her younger sister; she would tell Faiza, “Wear whatever fashion you want, just keep yourself covered, avoid tightly fitted clothes, and make sure you are not showing any part of your body skin other than your hand and face.”

Faiza wears loose-fitting pants and shirt. She chooses her own dresses while shopping. Zuleikha says she appreciates Faiza's appearance and expects that she will soon start wearing a headscarf like her mother. She reports that whenever the girls play dress-up games, they imitate an adult Muslim lady and wear hijab. She explains that she has resisted when Faiza told her that she wants to start wearing a hijab because the correct age to start is from the puberty and hopefully by next year, the Faiza will start hijab. When asked about her son

Zuleikha explains he is developing his dress sense from his father: he knows how to dress during prayer time, and he also does not show his skin. Zuleikha acknowledges she gives more emphasis to her girls' appearance because "the clothing style of random Kiwi girl is not what is expected in our religious ideology. I do not want to see that style in my daughters."

Zuleikha and her family only eat halal<sup>43</sup> foods that taste similar to the foods they had in Pakistan. Zuleikha cooks at home and they do not dine out much. If they wish to dine out, they would go to a restaurant that serves halal food only. At home Zuleikha does not prepare any separate food for her children: they have been habituated with the tastes all through their life. Zuleikha explains that none of her children was born here. Anaya was about five when they moved to New Zealand. The elder two were born in Pakistan and the youngest one was born in America when Zuleikha was studying there. By the time the family came to New Zealand, the children's food tastes had already developed.

This family strictly maintains eating halal food and Zuleikha teaches her children to eat only halal. She states that without observing halal they would be doing sin and would not secure an expected afterlife. She teaches her children to read the ingredients first before eating. Sometimes she finds it difficult to make the children understand why they cannot eat chocolate or other food that is not halal. She recalls, "For a five-year-old, chocolate is the most attractive food in the world. But my children cannot eat all the attractive foods stacked in the shelves of grocery stores. So making them understand why we cannot eat those yummy treats becomes difficult sometimes. But there is no room for negotiation here!" Zuleikha tells her children, "these foods are good for you, and it is the rules of Allah. You can only get the halal foods." She rejects foods her children demand and replaced each of them with ones which are halal to make them understand that they are not losing anything by being Muslim. She explains that she uses the word halal frequently to put the concept deeply in their mind when they would go for shopping, and says that through strongly maintained repetitive practice the children are now only asking for foods which are halal.

Zuleikha explains that in Pakistan, besides religious festivals, there are locally celebrated cultural festivals such as *Basant*, spring festival, *Vaisakhi*, harvesting festival, and various national days. She also recalls Punjab festivals such as commercial fairs and *Urs*, devotional fairs celebrating anniversaries of Islamic Sufi saints at their shrines. However, here in

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<sup>43</sup> Halal refers to what is permissible in Islam. Halal food represents the eatable elements which adheres to Islamic law, as guided in the Quran.

Christchurch, she says, the family mainly celebrates the two Eid festivals. She says, “To us, we knew what Basant is while we were growing up. It was in our geographic calendar that we would have spring at that time, we would enjoy the time naturally. But it is not the reality for my children: why should they celebrate spring when in Christchurch it is really cold and winter?” She argues that local and cultural festivals are created in relation to place and that change of place from Punjab to Christchurch results in a loss of importance of those festivals in her children’s lives.

Zuleikha explains that the way she celebrates Eid here is very different from the practice in Pakistan, and one of the main differences is created by the gender role. She says, “The Eid day starts with an early morning prayer. In Pakistan, women do not generally go to the mosque. Women usually make everything ready for the men. The men go to the mosque and pray. Then they come back home and take breakfast with everybody.” However, in New Zealand, Zuleikha goes to the mosque along with her family members. In both Eids, they get up early in the morning, get ready, go to the mosque, pray and begin the celebration. After prayer, they take breakfast all together at home. Then they go to the Pakistani community gathering to celebrate the Eid with all the Pakistanis living in Christchurch.

She admits she likes the Pakistani way of starting the Eid day because there she had the luxury to relax for some time after sending the men to the mosque. She complains that in Christchurch the mosque is not big enough, especially the space for women's prayer. If the weather gets cold and wet and they cannot get a good space for the Eid prayer it is not a comfortable start for the celebration.

### **Loss of housemaid, extended family and intimate community**

In Christchurch, Zuleikha’s Pakistani community involvements are mainly related to the celebrations of religious festivals. She states that the gatherings give her family a relatively realistic feeling of the festive feelings of the crowd that she left behind in Pakistan. She explains that because she belongs to a joint family at home she handled a lot of get-togethers in her household during Eid. She notes it as the greatest loss for the immigrants: to leave the family behind. With the loss of extended family, she says, many migrant families lose all enjoyment of festivals in their post-migration stress period. Hence, for this family, celebrating the religious festivals became the main reason to mingle with other Pakistani families.

Zuleikha explains that in Christchurch the Pakistani community gives her the feeling of a pseudo-community, unlike the deeply rooted familial contexts of Punjab. People from a different region of Pakistan come together to create a harmony of *Pakistani Identity*, but individually they are very different and separate from each other. Although they are all Muslims many of them have different languages, with different cultures and attitudes. Hence, she explains, there is a sense of very superficial belongingness in the community.

She says they have become friends with only one family from Pakistan, which is also originally from Punjab, and they meet irregularly. That family also has children who are younger than Zuleikha's trio and were born here and do not know much about their home country. "From the Zafar's family," she says, "my children would not learn much about their country and culture, maybe their children could learn something from mine."

Zuleikha openly misses her housemaids. She explains that having in-house servants is still a common practice in many of households in her home context, and is much cheaper over there than any household support in Christchurch. She adds that, in Pakistan, they came from an affluent background established by their ancestors, whereas in Christchurch they are building their own base and still struggling to position themselves on the New Zealand economic ladder. She explains that she particularly misses the 'helping hands' because of the gender role in work distribution in her family context which directs that household jobs are for women. Hers is a complaint articulated by many immigrant ladies from South Asia in Christchurch and is repeated identified as one of the biggest changes they had to make in living abroad. In researching Muslim couples' attitudes towards intimate family violence, Gennari, Giuliani and Accordini (2017) discussed the stress factors in the post-migration situation which serve as potential triggers for family violence. They found that leaving their extended family at home country is problematic for both Muslim men and women: men would drown themselves by taking on excessive outside workloads whereas women would suffer, complaining about the lack of support and protection they used to get from different sources especially from their extended family.

### **Multilingual demands and loss of the mother tongue, Punjabi**

Zuleikha lingers over expressing concerns about her children's mother tongue acquisition. She explains that at home she and Yusuf speak only Urdu. They started speaking with their kids in Urdu from their birth because, in their home context, it gives a sense of pride and

secures a higher social status if people are able to teach their children Urdu correctly. She mentions that it is an “aristocrat” language in her native context and there was hidden social pressure to teach Urdu to prove that they are well-mannered, educated, concerned parents. Therefore, she and Yusuf focused on Urdu when they were in Punjab and assumed their children would learn Punjabi in time anyway from Punjabi speaking surroundings.

However, in Christchurch, the children are not learning the Punjabi language automatically. Since Zuleikha and her husband did not usually communicate in Punjabi, it is now difficult to change the practice. She continues, “Most of the time, even me and my husband speak in Urdu. There is no time of Punjabi, maybe a maximum of roughly fifteen minutes a day we speak Punjabi. We are sorry about this situation. In the beginning, we did not realise that we are already killing our mother language in our family.”

Zuleikha explains that both of the languages give her the same comfort, but Urdu has been a formal language. With her parents and siblings, she never speaks in Urdu, it is always in Punjabi. But with outsiders, she always preferred Urdu. Even with her husband, she could not speak in Punjabi for three to four years after their marriage. It was an arranged marriage and it took quite a bit time for her to get the homely ease to talk in Punjabi. She considers that it is perhaps how they have been brought up: whenever they step out of their home, they start to speak in Urdu. And now her children are missing one of the main parts of their parents’ root cultural identity. Zuleikha says, “Without the language, they can never become a Punjabi. In the future, they may need that identity and the language is the main part of that identity. Whenever they will visit their own country, they would feel the need to shift their cultural identity from *Pakistani Muslim* to *Punjabi Muslim*. Even if they never go back, it is very important for me. If my children don’t know Punjabi, their future generation would have Urdu or English as their mother tongue. It is sad!”

Nevertheless, Zuleikha is pleased with her children’s skill in Urdu. All three can speak in Urdu and her eldest child, who started school in Pakistan, can also read and write in Urdu. Besides Urdu and English, Zuleikha’s children are also learning Arabic for their religious practice. All three can read in Arabic, and, Zuleikha says, since Urdu and Arabic have the same writing the eldest can write in Arabic too. However, none of the children can understand the Arabic language as they are learning it only for religious practice and specifically to read the verses of the Quran. Zuleikha affirms she aims to teach her children

Arabic more comprehensively because it is not only a sacred language but also they may need the skill if they settle later in a Middle Eastern country.

Zuleikha shares her desire to start teaching the Hadis in Urdu, not using an English translation. She prefers Urdu because translation often lacks the original essence of the text. When questioned about whether Urdu is itself a translation of the original Arabic (Brown, 2010), she explains that both Urdu and Arabic are the same in writing, and so reading the Urdu script would help the children develop their skill in both languages. She adds that Urdu allows her the comfort of explaining the verses clearly to her children. Finally, following intense discussion, she explains that teaching the Hadis in Urdu is contextually adapted from her family. Since she belongs to the country with Muslim majority she, along with her family, values her national language, Urdu, as an 'Islamic language'. She also recognises the historical importance of establishing Urdu throughout Pakistan at the time of independence.

Haque (1982) similarly reported that Urdu was recognised as the language of Indian Muslims in the historic Pakistan movement. It is noteworthy that English was not initially appreciated during the period of British colonisation in the Indian subcontinent which then included what is now Pakistan. Tharoor (2017) stated, "The English language was not a deliberate gift to India, but again an instrument of colonialism, imparted to Indians only to facilitate the tasks of the English." Viswanathan (1987) reported that the transition of including the English language in the Indian society that had depended on Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic literature was not smooth; the masses came into contact with English mainly from the missionaries. Perhaps the conception of English as a *non-Islamic* language is linked with the history of establishing the English language in the education system of Pakistan when it was still part of British India.

Zuleikha explains that none of her children attend any Urdu class in Christchurch and that she is not trying to teach them Urdu or Punjabi because this is their third year in New Zealand and they are still coping with all the changes and adjust to a new and very different culture. She sees it as a cultural shock: dealing with a new language, new school, new friends, new education system and the most important the sadness of leaving their grandparents' house and all their same-aged cousins. Therefore, she does not want to put any more burdens on them by teaching all these languages. She plans to teach the languages after a couple of years.

### **A fluid, shifting space for gender**

Zuleikha reports that in her home culture, gender preference is a common practice. Although she has brought up in a traditional family, she does not want to practice this habit in her family in Christchurch. She generalises Asian countries' classification of work, "Every child learns about the stereotypical classification of girls' and boys' work sets within an Asian society. People expect that the girls need to be raised for the household jobs and boys should do all the outside work and income. And practically it is happening in most of the cases in Pakistan." Zuleikha recounts that boys and girls have different social status and the girls' status is below boys: "Anybody can understand, it is not a hidden matter in Pakistan. Boys are getting a better education, going for a good job outside. Girls are stopping their education after a certain level and staying at home to do household, get married early and become mother early." She assumes male domination is typical across South Asian cultures.

Zuleikha reports that even before the birth of a child, parents hope for a boy because if it is a girl they would need to arrange the wedding earlier with a lot of unofficially expected dowry from the groom's family. Zuleikha sighs: "Our religion never allows dowry, however, it is inbuilt in our society like a pest!" She recounts that people take boys as an asset to help them in their elderly age. Zuleikha reflects that first she needs to stop the practice in her life and she is trying to make a change in her everyday life. She says, "My girls and my boy both are ultimate assets to me... they are priceless. I will never give any pressure on my boy to take care of us in our old age, as well as I do not believe my daughters are my burden. Again it is easier to follow this philosophy here because nobody is controlling me here and this society is a gender equal society compared to ours."

Zuleikha states that she makes an effort to practice gender equity inside her house: "In my household, I never favour any of my children; rules are the same for everyone. All of my children help me to do the groceries, in the kitchen and while doing any other household job". She admits that if someday her girls go back to Pakistan they will be highly criticised for their attitudes and she would also get criticism for how she has brought up her girls. However, she affirms, this worry is not enough to create obstacles in her practise. She adds, "I and Yusuf try to share our duties equally at home but it is new to us and not always possible." She explains that Yusuf has brought up in a traditional Pakistani family. In Christchurch, his role as a man is different from the one he played at home throughout his life. Zuleikha acknowledges his effort and adds that he is trying his best to adjust to the change.

### **Migration as an opportunity for better parenting; ‘our way of teaching’**

Zuleikha reflects that they have become better parents after migration. She says that she is spending quality time with her children here by concentrating on their development. She recalls that by belonging to a joint family system her children had their grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins with them. She comments that peer groups are very good for children's psychophysical development, but they make difficulties for teaching discipline. She considers that the children are learning quickly in Christchurch and she and her husband have more control in making decisions for their children. She says, “Since we the parents do not have anyone to guide us here, we can take our own decisions. We can judge what is good for our children and then pass it to them.” In Pakistan, she says, they had no control on that: their children would learn different concepts from various sources. They would learn “from the media, outsiders, even from extended family members, and they would do the sins,” she says, adding, “Here at least we can control that they are not taught anything bad from home to give them a better present and afterlife.” She repeats that she can now avoid native festivals as some have activities that do not support the philosophies of Islam.

She says, “Yes, it is difficult to deal with the westernised culture of this place and teach the right path of Islam, but still now I think I am doing it pretty well.” To explain she recalls, “Once we were sitting in the back yard. We were eating ice cream. My eldest one did not find any chair so she sat on the grass. The grass was wet. I asked her, ‘Why you are sitting on wet grass! Stand up please.’ And she surprised me by replying, ‘No! I don’t want *Shaitan*<sup>44</sup> to eat my ice cream. I am not going to stand up.’ Zuleikha explains that the children are becoming well-mannered and respectful and she observes a positive development in their attitude day by day. She is proud of her success as a mother as her children are practising the activities that she had been teaching them.

Zuleikha acknowledges that sometimes she needs to become harsh while teaching her children. She recognises herself as a very strict mother who does not hesitate to discipline her children. She says, “I don’t want to discuss much in this regard because people do not take it positively. But I think you know how we South Asian parents discipline our children, it is different than the way people do here!” Researchers (Maker, Shah, and Agha, 2005; Pe-Pua,

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<sup>44</sup> The Devil.



Gendera, Katz and O'Connor, 2010) have noted that respect and discipline are valued within the South Asian Immigrant community and that corporal punishment is a significant parenting strategy. Pe-Pua, Gendera, Katz and O'Connor (2010) found that while some immigrant families considered corporal punishment acceptable in Australia, they expressed that they were denied their right to implement parental control because children's rights were promoted. Although Zuleikha does not discuss corporal punishment her statement "to make them respectful, I never hesitate to become harsh!" suggests her approach.

Zuleikha states that her children go to school happily and that they have praised the teachers' approach. She reports that Faiza has experienced school in both countries and tells her mother that her class teachers are very "nice, soft and happy" here and they do not bring any "stick at class for punishment". She states that the children have not yet faced any awkward experience at school she has never received any criticism about the children from school.

Zuleikha says the schools are not providing support to teach her children their native culture and she does not expect anything from the school. Rather she is thankful that till now nobody in the school or outside the home is making any problems in her teaching process. She assumes that when her girls will start wearing a hijab they may start to face problems because she has heard about some unwelcomed experiences of other girls who wear head scarfs at school.

She adds, however, that if any bad incident happens with her girls, the family would deal with it at that time. She does not want to make any prior plan. She predicts that if she starts discussing such events with her children, they would start to see their classmates as threats. She considers such discussions would be poisonous for a child mind and might make her children start to feel shame about their own identity. She states optimistically, "Allah gives us difficulties and he gives the ways to come out of it too. If anything bad happens, I am confident that we would be able to go through it."

Zuleikha shares her opinion that New Zealand society is more "tolerant" than many other countries she visited. Particularly she compares her experience of living in the United States of America where the family lived for two years for her study and faced serious racism. She does not want to discuss those experiences but says it is never pleasant to feel discrimination. She says that since they have moved to New Zealand they have not faced any specific incident that they can point to as racism, that she cannot predict the future but till now their

experience is smooth. She praises Christchurch as a more conservative, decent society with people upholding family values.

She states that good values are universal, not dependent on country, nationality or place. She states that she believes that the family is the main source for children to get their values and manners. Therefore, she has not readjusted basic values or manners for migration. For instance, she explains, "I am wearing the clothes suitable for this weather but am wearing them in the manner that respects my religious values and I am wearing a headscarf as well." She mentions the differences in toilet use and how she is teaching her children to maintain Islamic rules of using water. She says, "For any children, their parents are their role model. Parents have to do practically whatever they want to teach their children." She contends that if parents are not doing their household work in the right way, they should stop expecting their children to do everything appropriately.

Zuleikha states that the main two values she wants to sustain in her children are respect and truthfulness. She explains that she and her husband are being truthful and respectful to their children to teach them these two beautiful virtues. She offers the example that her younger children never call their elders by name. Both of them call their elder sister *Api* (sister) and Anaya calls Arshan *Bhaiya* (brother). Zuleikha says, "This is what I want them to carry with them to their children. This is a very significant part of my native culture to respect elders."

Zuleikha recounts that her children are not very involved with art. The only art form her children practise is reciting the Quran in a good manner. "My children can recite Quran beautifully," she says. "If it can be accepted as an art, then I am very happy to tell you that it is my desire that someday my kids will be national or international level Quran reciters. And I am giving a good effort on it to engage them more with my religion." She explains that in their house the use of technology for entertainment is limited; they do not play any music, do not watch television other than the news, do not watch movies, try to avoid taking photographs if not necessary and never put photographs on the walls. Dancing is completely unacceptable and is taken as a sin. These practices, she explains, are all related to their religion. However, the children do video conferencing quite often because of their Arabic classes and use tablets at the school for education purposes. "These are unavoidable and I am not opposed to the modern technology," she says. "But I do not allow them to get involved with any kind of recreation activities that are not supported by Islam."

### Perception of Māori – Pākehā relations

When first asked about her views on the Treaty relationship and multicultural relationships of New Zealand Zuleikha says “I have no idea about this issue.” She explains that she is still not experienced enough to make a significant comment on the cultural relationships of New Zealand. In later discussions, she makes brief comments. About the multicultural relationships, she comments that she has not found any distinct New Zealand cultural identity: it is either the shadow of white British, Scottish, Irish cultures for white Kiwis, indigenous cultures for Māori; and most migrant groups preserve their separate cultures. All of them are acting like separate pieces, she says, and those pieces are yet not connecting to each other and not showing any meaningful picture of a whole identity. She says, “I don’t know much detail of these different cultures other than mine, and there are plenty of migrants like me. Not only migrants, but I am sure the New Zealanders also know very little about each other! You would not find it in the States. You would never need to explain what ‘Eid’ is over there, but here you still find plenty of people who never heard of it!”

She comments on the Treaty relationships and states that there is a hidden hierarchy between the “native white people” and the indigenous Māori people and she can see a distinct gap between these two cultures. She says she has felt the tension whenever she has come across with these two cultural groups. She mentions that some of the immigrants she knows have negative perceptions related to the indigenous community: they advised her to keep a distinct gap between her children and Māori children. She relates that they described the indigenous children as “less educated and less mannered”. She acknowledges that while she is not guiding her children to select their friends by ethnicity, she is stopping them from receiving any of the cultural concepts offered by the indigenous culture. She acknowledges she has little knowledge about the indigenous Māori culture and she has less interest to know anything about it. She has given all the responsibility to the school regarding teaching anything about New Zealand history and culture. She says, “I tell my kids if any activity at school is comfortable for you and does not hurt the values of Islam, you can do it. If it is not, then please go to your teacher to ask for a change. For instance, we did not allow them to join the haka<sup>45</sup> and have the marae<sup>46</sup> visit because these would not be permitted in our religion.”

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<sup>45</sup> Haka is a traditional Māori dance form

<sup>46</sup> Marae is an ancestral meeting ground

### Teasing out key threads

Two key themes emerge from Zuleikha's narrative: one is that despite gaining residency she sees New Zealand as a temporary stopover; the second is the pre-eminent position that religion has in shaping her values and practices.

Throughout her account Zuleikha stresses that her family's presence in New Zealand is transitory. She constructs her acceptance of life in Christchurch as a hiatus space in her overarching desire to live in an Islamic country, and she makes it clear she has not built any emotional or social attachment to New Zealand. New Zealand offers the opportunity to develop educational qualifications and work experience and a versatile passport.

The transitory nature of her interest in New Zealand seems to lead to her acknowledged disinterest in the country's history and current socio-cultural issues: she lives here now but firmly intends to move again. Zuleikha acknowledged that she heard about the Treaty of Waitangi for the first time from me in our first meeting. When I tried to extend our discussion on this topic, she showed little interest. That her children are learning about the history of the country from school is satisfactory because she recognises it is necessary for children who come from outside to learn about the area they have moved into. However, it is not an area of their education she feels any need to participate in, and she firmly resists any cultural exploration by her children that she considers might be contracted to the practices of Islam.

Zuleikha maintains that the role of the school in her children's lives should be strictly academic. She explains that she is content that schools should not try to deal with the culture of immigrant children and the implication is that she might well resist such engagement as interference with, and potential corruption of, her own role in shaping her children's understandings and beliefs.

Despite her clearly acknowledged sense of social and ideological separation from the wider community she lives in Zuleikha admits that life in New Zealand allows her to be selective in what aspects of her native culture she wants to sustain for her children, rejecting the gender bias she has been brought up with. She repeatedly critiques the interference and the tightly rigid social bonds of her native context. Nevertheless, she misses family support and the availability of household help from servants.

The pre-eminent importance of religion is evident throughout her narrative: it is the backbone of her identity and the basis of every aspect of her processes of culture transmission. Her cultural interests focus on the behaviours and values that will form her children as good

Muslims and equip them for living in an Islamic country as well as for having a better afterlife. She notes that, to some extent, it is easier to teach religious values to her children away from what she continually sees as her home as she has no one to stop her from making decisions. Religion impacts on the activities she allows her children, the dress codes she expects from them and the beliefs she fosters. It also influences the strict disciplinarian nature of her relationship with her children.

Religion is prioritised over nationalism. In defining her identity, her previous national constructs seem to have given way after migration to a sense of trans-national Islamic community. Nevertheless, Zuleikha regrets the loss of her mother tongue in her family. Her account of the loss of Punjabi language resonates with the loss of many other languages throughout the world due to colonisation and its aftermath. In her case, Urdu has taken the status of elite language over the long rooted local language, Punjabi, during the establishment of the neo-nation of Pakistan. Haque (1982) reported how after the independence of Pakistan, English first continued as the official language because of the Bengali language movement in East Pakistan, and how when Urdu was imposed as the official national language it acerbated the tensions between West and East Pakistan and contributed to the breakup of the union and the independence of Bangladesh. Rahman (1997) also reported ethnic movements focusing language after the independence of Pakistan. His account of the suppression of Punjabi language and culture by Urdu and English aligns with Zuleikha's sense of losing the struggle to preserve her native language.

Another impact of migration that Zuleikha notes is a change in financial status: she can no longer afford the privilege of household help she once had, and she feels she is fully occupied in running her household with no opportunity to engage with her children's learning in any other areas than religion.

Separation is a frequent theme in Zuleikha's story. She has been separated from her supportive joint family. Now she is teaching her children how to keep their separate identity apart from other members of their society. She has chosen to separate her family from the mainstream cultures of Christchurch, and from some of the aspects of her native culture as well. That she has not experienced any instances of racism is perhaps a feature of her chosen isolation. Her separatism aligns with the findings of Robinson (2009) who reported that separation is an acculturation strategy that has been adopted by his Pakistani participants in Britain.

Zuleikha's narrative has a number of implications for schools and teaching. Taken with other narratives in this study, it indicates that immigrants have significantly diverging views about the degree to which schools should engage with the cultural identity of immigrant children. Teachers and policymakers need to be aware of such differences and create processes for negotiating cross-cultural engagements with parents and communities. Arguably not all expectations can be met, but the dialogue is important. Parental engagement with schools is thus also important. Zuleikha's self-distancing from the activities of school is a challenge that school needs to deal with and perhaps strategies to overcome.

## Chapter Nine: Poush



*Poush Aman is a forty-eight-year old full-time working woman originally from Bangladesh. She and her husband Magh Aman have lived in Christchurch for the last nineteen years and have one child. Magh is working in a multinational company as a project coordinator and has invested in multiple businesses. They are New Zealand citizens. The couple were fellow students of a university in Bangladesh. After completion of their bachelor degrees in Bangladesh, they achieved a scholarship to do their postgraduate diploma in New Zealand. They got married and came here. After finishing the diploma, they decided to settle in Christchurch. Their only child Muntasir, aged twelve, studies in year eight at a local primary school.*

### Keeping alive the Bangaliyana

Muntasir is our only son. He is like the sun in our family and we are orbiting around him. We want him to be an excellent human. We try to keep the Bangaliyana<sup>47</sup> alive

<sup>47</sup> The culture of the Bengali ethnic group whose mother tongue is Bangla. It has been originated from the place Bengal, in Bangladesh and in India.

inside our home. I don't know how far he will be able to keep his native identity but currently, he is practising well and we wish to see him as a grown-up who practises his own culture.

We hope he will take only those aspects of Kiwi culture which will help him to survive here: to have a better education, to have a respectable job, to build his future. He needs it just to fit into the world he is getting into outside his home.

I was a stay-at-home mother for a long time, and I have invested every bit of my time to teach my son about our culture. You know, when you are building a house, you can do much hard work on it if the foundation has been done properly. So I was scaffolding him all the time until I felt the foundation is strong enough. Now I spend less time with him compared to before, but I am confident that he will keep growing in the shape we have been providing.

We have a very small community and we consider the Bangladeshis of Christchurch as our relatives; it is like a village within a village. Community people are welcome to come to our place any time, have food, listen to the songs of Magh. Besides enjoying community activities, we make ourselves involved with the community mainly to teach our son about our culture.

I know it is a very big demand to make of him, but I want him to talk like us. I would like to see him talking in Bangla and thinking in Bangla as well. Not just thinking in English and translating those words in Bangla. It may never happen, but there is nothing wrong to have a big dream.

Muntasir can talk and understands Bangla but, unfortunately, sometimes I feel that he wants to use more English than Bangla. He has developed a different accent in talking. His intonation is more like English. He talks with us in Bangla. But whenever we have a gathering with other Bangladesh families, I have noticed that he discusses various computer games and books in English with the other Bangladeshi children. It means they are more comfortable in English. It is sad but a truth for us as migrant parents.



We started to teach him reading and writing a little late when he was seven. We should have started earlier alongside English. We were relaxed in teaching him Bangla letters, as it was not related to his school work. One or two days in a fortnight, for one hour he used to practise with us. Now he complains that it is difficult, which makes sense. Even for us, it took more time to learn Bangla writing rules than English. But I am happy that Muntasir is learning. Now he can read write the letters accurately, can use some of the rules while reading and writing. He reads slowly, writes small lines. He is progressing.

You saw him, he was unable to read and understand Bangla words before. Can you remember in one of our events how he was using google translate to make the powerpoint? It was in 2015 I guess. But see his handwriting now; he can read and write basic things in Bangla.

After going to school, our native language skill goes down. But I am not blaming the teachers for that. They have been always supportive. It was a huge relief to hear nice words of support from the preschool teacher and that encouraged us to stick with our plan to practise Bangla at home.

Sometimes he identifies his mix of languages and says, ‘Maa I am talking in *Banglish*<sup>48</sup>!’ And I reply, ‘please try to not mixing up languages, it makes the language sound unpleasant’. Several times he argued, ‘I know you can talk in English, I have seen that you are talking in English with my teachers. Then why cannot we talk in English at home? It would be much easier if we could speak in one language like James or Andrew!’ I replied, ‘Yes, we can talk fluently in English. But our mother tongue is Bangla. If you do not use it at least at home, you will forget Bangla. So we would appreciate if you consider using Bangla at home.’ And this conversation is not a one day deal, you know!

I never hoped that Muntasir would use a Banglish language with a very different accent than us. However, I think if you are living in abroad it is unavoidable. At school, he is using English. At his piano classes, everything is in English. At home

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<sup>48</sup> Banglish has been used in urban areas of Bangladesh to refer to inappropriately mixing of Bangla and English language.

when he is playing video games or spending time on his computer, he is also using only English. He has his own you-tube channel with thousands of subscribers. He is using English to create the contents in that too. In this way, his English practice hour is going higher and Bangla is going lower. I know he does not use English with us intentionally to hurt us, but we have seen several times that he is struggling to use Bangla. I feel upset about that, but nothing to do.

People from our district in Bangladesh are usually very culturally minded. Music is in our blood, especially it is a passion for Magh. We often perform our music with musical instruments, harmonium, tabla, dhol<sup>49</sup>, and bashi<sup>50</sup>, in front of our community people. Muntasir's talent for music is hereditary. Magh has been spending quality time to teach him the harmonium and our country songs. Muntasir started to learn to play the harmonium from when he was three and that practice leads him to play the piano beautifully.

We would be happy if he admires music all through his life. But I appreciate him focusing more on his mainstream education. Whatever he becomes in his later life, he should secure an honourable position in his profession. A career in music is not secure. You see, as a migrant, we'll always hope to have a secure life for him. Maybe he'll become a computer engineer or graphic designer since he shows good interest in these fields now. But I feel my son's concentration is too scattered. He has an interest in doing everything! It makes me tense.

Muntasir understands that we are different from most of his friends, we are Muslims and we have taught him to understand it. He always eats with his right hand. From the very beginning, he uses water in the toilet for cleaning himself. Even at school, he carries a separate bottle for that. He welcomes the guests in our home with a Salam. These are the very basic practice of Islam but quite different from his friends. Muntasir is learning Namaz from Magh.

At first, he will read the translations of the Quran as he is not learning Arabic on a regular basis. He did not start reading it as I think it is a very heavy thing to

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<sup>49</sup> A type of traditional drum

<sup>50</sup> Traditional flute, handmade from bamboo stick.

understand at an early age, it demands maturity. And there is no point if he cannot understand it! Maybe after a couple of years, we'll offer him it to read. He has several times seen us read the Quran in Arabic. He understands the importance and holiness of the book.

Although I feel that as a Muslim I should always follow the rules, sometimes for various reasons we cannot follow them. I never expect anything from Muntasir that I am not doing. To me it is hypocrisy. So I want him at least become a believer, know all the five pillars of Islam and later in his life be able to read the Quran.

Once Muntasir asked me, 'Maa, we are Muslims. I have read in the books you gave me that Muslim women need to cover themselves in a particular way. Islam has a guideline to do that. So as a Muslim why you don't wear any headscarf?' I was surprised but I know he was not criticising my clothing. He was just being confused and asked me to clear the clouds in his mind. So I answered truthfully, 'That I do not cover my head it does not mean that I do not have faith in Allah. Islam is my belief, and my appearance is representing my culture. It is my choice to dress in a way that shows the modesty of my culture and religion as well as the comfort that's needed to live in this place.' I think he understood my point. He never asked anything again regarding this matter.

We do not celebrate Christmas. My son did not like this as all of his friends have exciting gifts on Christmas. He used to tell me, 'there is no fun in celebrating Eid. It is only for eating good foods. Why can't we celebrate Christmas and have a tree with lots of gifts!' I always answered, since we are Muslims, we should not celebrate it. This was not good enough for him as he always wanted the reason. Then the book helped me to teach him the reason behind it.

We have no problem with enjoying the festivals outside our home. If I prohibit my son to enjoy other festivals with his society, for example with his mates at school or at his piano class, he may become disrespectful to people from other cultures. We never want that to happen. Inside our home, we only celebrate the festivals that are relevant to our culture and religion.

In Bangladesh, our family, friends, school curriculum, and all our surrounding teaches us about the liberation war. Our parents did not need to give much effort to teach us about our history. But it is not happening with my son. So we regularly try to celebrate the national days. I have been telling him the stories of our liberation war on those days. We have given him easy books that are written for children to understand. Now he knows the reasons behind celebrating our national days; he knows about our freedom fight, language movement, and independence.

We used to arrange two parties for him on his birthday. The first was full of traditional food and country songs, it had the feeling of a typical Bangladeshi birthday party. The other party we would arrange for Muntasir's friends, which is full of fun: party decorations, music and dance, fun games, goodies, customised character cakes and sweet treats. Sometimes we arranged it outside, for example for one of his birthdays we took them at the Air Force Museum. Muntasir enjoyed both, but I think he loved the second one more.

Maybe the moral values are the same all over the world and it does not matter whether you are from eastern countries or a native New Zealander. It will depend on the person: how he or she wants to develop their family. But social manners and practices I see in most of the families of Christchurch are very different than common Bangladeshi families.

I am not saying that the way Kiwis teach their children about family values is bad. But our practices are very different in many ways. I have my values with me, I know how to teach them in a Bangladeshi way and I want to keep that. Such as, as husband-wife our romantic life is considerably more private than Kiwis'. It doesn't mean that we do not love each other.

Many of Muntasir's classmates got much age-inappropriate knowledge, such as the way they use some adult words. I can tell you one story and you can understand. Muntasir was seven years old at that time. One day Muntasir asked me, 'Maa what is gay? Aden always asks me if I am gay or not! He asked me will I have sex with a man. What does it mean? Maa, I feel weird when he talks like that.' I was not prepared for this sort of discussion, I felt shaky. But I didn't give any anxious reaction to him to

make him curious. I told him 'when you will grow a little bit older you will learn it. What Aden has told you is not right to know at your age. It is not something very bad but it is not the right age to learn. You do not need to be worried, and thanks for letting me know. I will discuss with his mum. If he continues telling you such a word in the future, please let me know. I will tell the teacher about it.'

Marriage as an eternal bond is not very common here, you know. Children are growing up in families where they learn about separation, divorce, parents having different partners very easily which is still quite uncommon in my country. Having a child without marriage is still socially forbidden in Bangladesh but you can find many such parents here. I am not complaining, just saying that it is different. Maybe he'll get these concepts from school, that's a shame. But at least the family environment he is getting from his home would always be respectful in terms of our social values.

He should marry a Muslim girl. Otherwise, we'll be angry. But we'll not leave him if he marries a non-Muslim girl. At the end of the day, I am a mother and he is my only child. This is an honest anxiousness and to some extent a terrifying part of being a migrant. If I was living in my country, I could at least imagine his future partner. But here it is impossible. Ours was a love marriage and I am not going to push him to marry a girl chosen by us. If he cannot find a partner and gives us the privilege, we will try to arrange it. I wish to see him make a family with a nice Bangladeshi Muslim girl.

Although he is not much of a foodie, he loves our cuisine. In future, he will try and like other foods too but hopefully those tastes will not erase his love for his native food as he had those foods from his very early age! Sometimes I feel it would be easier if he could take some other foods. But I am proud that he loves our tastes and it is great that he is not fond of any junk food like other kids.

My country is excellent but the people there cannot take anything in a simple way. Everyone is too rigid and has a complicated way of perceiving everything. Most of the time even the highly educated people do not like to give liberty to their adult children while making any important life decisions, for instance choosing a partner or

a profession. We also have some preferences for Muntasir but we will never push him to take our decision.

The way I talked with Muntasir on the gay topic, without scolding him for questioning, would be completely impossible in most of the Bangladeshi families. In my country sex is not a topic that we discuss openly with a child. If children ask this sort of question their parents will strongly criticise them and even can give them a slap.

I don't feel Muntasir got those comments from Aden because of our colour. Many adults may hold a racist point of view, but not a little child. Maybe he has learnt these topics from the adults in his family or from media and used that word out of curiosity.

But I have got various comments from people about my religion and my appearance. A Muslim with no hijab! Nowadays, you'll find many Bangladeshi women wearing hijab but it is not historically a Bangladeshi dress. It came from the Middle Eastern culture to my country. It is iconic for the religion of the majority people of Bangladesh, and in the last two decades, the number of hijab users is growing rapidly. It is not bad to have a hijab, but, you see, it would be a misconception if people think that all Bangladeshi Muslim women wear a hijab. Our aunts or grandmas used to wear sharee and they used to loosely cover their head with their *Aanchol*<sup>51</sup>.

It is very common for me to get comments from Kiwis, "you are Muslim! You do not look like a Muslim" because I don't wear a hijab. You see, I am not showing the globally marketed look of a Muslim woman! I always try to reply politely to them that my appearance shows the whole of my identity and to me, my religion is a part of my identity. And you know, if I was wearing a hijab, my life would be more difficult. Many people here hate the hijab, especially after nine eleven.

Sometimes people amaze me with their kind gestures to our diversity. Some shown respect to my fasting in the holy month of Ramadan and that truly touches me.

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<sup>51</sup> The decorated edge of a Sharee that hangs loose from shoulder, people usually drape it or use it as a veil.

However, not all of my experiences are as sweet as that. I can share one incident of hundreds. One day another parent said to me, 'You do not eat meat, right?' I replied, 'We eat only halal meat.' And she asked, 'What is halal?' I explained the process of making meat halal; the butcher needs to slaughter the animal by the name of Allah. She became furious after listening and said, 'Oh! I got it. It is awful! I cannot take the halal process of slaughtering. It is horrible. How can you eat it? Muslims do awful things worldwide. I think this is because they grow up seeing these cruel actions. Above all it is gross!' I felt I was becoming a stone at that time; a cold, frozen stone. I wanted to reply but I couldn't! I should have continued the discussion. Pork and alcohol are religiously prohibited for us. I have never told that person that when she eats ham and pork it is *horrible, awful or gross!* And why should I? It is her choice, just the way eating halal is mine! Still, now I regret not saying anything on that day.

Some of the children may get the seed of racism from their home but the teachers have a magic wand to cure those children. I really appreciate the way my son's earlier teacher has taken care of racist comments. It is a serious matter and you cannot teach a child about it by punishing or giving time-out. Discussion is the best way to teach it I think.

The storytelling session on every Eid has been an amazing arrangement the school is doing for the last three years. The lady is in her 60s and has a peaceful face with the wisdom of so many layers of experience. She is originally from one of the Middle Eastern countries and she describes different aspects of Islamic culture and Eid celebration by telling some stories. Muntasir is usually excited on that day to share his religious understandings with his friends. Before the granny sessions, Muntasir often used to forget many things when we taught him. But he remembers everything from those sessions as he is getting them from the school.

In every year-end function of the school, from year one, Muntasir had been performing a Bangla song. On International Mother Language Day, I prepared Muntasir to give a speech to his class about the history of our language movement. His classmates and teachers were amazed by listening to his speech.

The schools are not separating us or our children. And I must say, Muntasir's teachers are very skilled to deal with the students from thirty or more countries of origin. At the school, they have a day for native dress-up, a multicultural food day and a sports day. On the sports day, a child tries to teach one native game to the other children of the class.

On one of the sports days, I taught Muntasir about Kabaddi. I thought it is our national sport and he should learn it. I wanted him to teach everyone in his class about kabaddi when he has never played kabaddi. It was too much for him, he couldn't do it. Every seven years old child in the villages of Bangladesh knows about kabaddi, as they play or have seen others playing. But Muntasir was not one of them! I understood my fault. Next year I taught '*Rosh, Kosh, Shingara, Bulbuli, Mostok*<sup>52</sup>'. He likes playing it at home with us and he successfully taught his mates and teachers.

Whatever the country is doing for its indigenous culture is more than enough. I feel if there is no much use of the language in future, it will be a burden for the children to learn it perfectly.

We respect some of the Māori values, coincidentally some are common to ours. For example, Muntasir's teacher taught him sitting on the table is prohibited in Māori culture. The reason is simple. It is because we eat our food from the table and our buttocks might not be clean enough! The food can be contaminated if we do so. In Bangladesh we also do not sit on the table, it is disrespectful. There is a rule for not sitting on a pillow and not stepping over a person's leg too, and these are also traditionally followed by Bangladeshis.

I am thankful to the school for the marae visit. The instructors told us about the Māori histories, sang Māori songs, showed us how to do the hongi and pray. We have got different instructions before going there. Such as, you cannot make any sound in the prayer time, you need to be quiet. There is a dress restriction as well. You cannot wear any short dress or tight pants while in marae.

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<sup>52</sup> A common Bangladeshi hand game. It needs two or more people to play it.



We, the first generation migrants will always feel like an outsider. Maybe our children will fill this place as their own. So I do not have much interest to know about history because we are living in the present of this land. I feel there is no implementation of history in our life. But there is nothing wrong in knowing as well! But it does not attract me to learn on my own without any reason. But we always supported our child to learn.

Every place has its own characteristics and beauty; not all are the same. It is still a relatively white city. In some extent, it is potentially bicultural, or you may say multiracial but not yet multicultural. Yes, there are an increasing lot of different faces here from all over the world, but most of them are standing at the blurred edge of the whole picture; no one can notice their cultural differences.

### **A society within society**

Poush's narrative places importance on staying compact in one's own community to retain native culture. Throughout her discussion, she carefully navigates her commitment to her native culture, *Bangaliyana*. She defines it as the way of life of a person from Bengal: "the way we talk, eat, sleep, wear, cook, sing, dance, paint, tell stories, engage with the Bangla literature, do poetry, all of those things," she says. She repeatedly mentions her dedication to supporting Muntasir to make him actively involved in Bangaliyana.

Poush proudly praises Muntasir as a bright student, a passionate singer, an excellent piano player; her son is like a precious jewel received after seven years of marriage. In a Bangladeshi context, Poush reflects, when a couple does not become parents soon after their wedding knot, the child often becomes the centre of all attention. Poush states their life centres on creating a masterpiece of art in their beloved son.

Poush reports she stopped working when Muntasir was born. She has been a full-time mother for nine years. She asserts that time was needed for Muntasir to develop within his native culture and that it was well used. During that time Poush and her family have spent most of their free time with Bangladeshi community activities.

To Poush, the Bangladeshi community is like an island of Bangladesh inside Christchurch. She says that Christchurch is like a village, not very vibrant like the places of North Island of

New Zealand. She recalls many Bangladeshis in Christchurch have spent their weekends within the musical environment of her home. Through these gatherings, Muntasir had an opportunity for relatively regular interaction with his native people. However, nowadays, because of their busy work schedule and Muntasir's other engagements in study and music, the number of gatherings has reduced.

Muntasir grew up seeing Bangladeshi community members coming to their home almost every day. He used to think they were his own relatives. When at the age of six he visited Bangladesh he learned that he has many blood relatives living there. This sense of community belongingness, Poush recounts, helped his parents to teach him his culture of origin.

### **Tensions in language transmission**

The most important aspect of culture for Poush has been keeping her native language. She explains that she expects Muntasir to learn to speak Bangla in a Bangladeshi way and with a Bangladeshi accent: she wants him to process the language in his mind like any other Bangladeshi child. She acknowledges, however, that is not happening because he does not use the language enough and that this worries her. She notes the same is happening with many other Bangladeshi migrant children.

Poush recalls that Muntasir started to learn Bangla writing after turned seven. "Muntasir is interested in learning but always complains that it is very difficult," she says. She explains that he can read and write basic Bangla now but his progress is slower than in English and that is because Bangla writing is more complex than English. She reflects that she is happy with Muntasir's progress and expects he will be able to read Bangla books someday.

Poush recalls a community event in 2015 when Muntasir was unable to read the Bangla words. At that time he used to make powerpoint slides for the cultural festivals with his father's help. On that day he was using google translate to translate words from English to Bangla. He was unable to read the words in Bangla and so it was not meaningful. But in the last year Muntasir showed he could read from a Bangla children's book and he was himself excited by his progress.

Poush acknowledges that the teachers in Muntasir's school have been supportive of her determination to keep the Bangla language alive in Muntasir. Like others reported in this

thesis, Muntasir was only speaking Bangla until going to preschool regularly at the age of three. When he started preschool he was unable to speak a single word in English and it made him sad. Poush recalls that he came home crying every day because he could not communicate with his peers and the teachers. For three months it was difficult to take him to preschool, she says, but the situation gradually improved.

Afterwards, Poush relates, he started to like his preschool. His teachers helped him to cope with the transition. Poush reports: they memorised a list of Bangla words to communicate with him and to give instructions. Whenever she became worried she would have a discussion with the teachers. She reports that they kept reassuring her telling her not to worry as he would start speaking in English soon. They would tell her he was listening and was a good listener. They encouraged her to keep talking in Bangla at home and told her that he would sooner or later learn English from school. She reflects that this encouragement helped the family to continue practising Bangla at home. After seven months, she recalls, Muntasir was talking almost fluently in English at school as well as in Bangla at home.

She notes that there is no place for her son's first language inside the school; schools in Christchurch exclusively focus on English acquisition. Hence for school communication, study, and online activities Muntasir only uses English. As a result, he tends to use more English than Bangla in everyday communication and so eventually the quantity of his use of English words increases at home too. Both Poush and Magh always try to correct him to use Bangla. Sometimes Muntasir unconsciously mixes Bangla and English, Poush relates, and she repeatedly has to deal with this.

She adds that Muntasir does not have any friends who speak in Bangla in Christchurch. There is no child at his school from Bangladesh. There are some children in the Bangladeshi community but most of them are considerably older or younger. Moreover, when they meet at community functions, they like to communicate in English with each other. So he does not get to practise with peers. The shift in language preference from heritage language to the socially dominant language has been found in Caldas and Caron-Caldas (2000, 2002)'s case study of English-French bilingual children. Caldas and Caron-Caldas studied their three children and found that after raising their children in a predominantly French-speaking home the children's French deteriorated dramatically due to adolescent peer pressure. In Group Socialisation Theory, Harris (1995) also notes that ethnic minority children from bilingual

families shift from their heritage language to the dominant one due to their peer group's language preferences outside the home.

Poush suggests that if they could visit Bangladesh at least once a year, Muntasir's Bangladeshi language and cultural understandings would be refreshed. She recalls the second visit to Bangladesh that Muntasir made two years ago and how it helped to develop his language. Nevertheless, Poush reflects that she keeps her hope alive, saying, "I am not hopeless about him as he is always interested to learn! He may have a different accent, but he at least speaks in Bangla."

### **Encouragement of music as a hobby**

Poush discusses her family's dedication to Bangladeshi music. She mentions that Magh is a trained singer, had been a trainer in music in his student life in Bangladesh, and keeps practising his skill here with the musical instruments they brought from home. She explains that she can also sing and dance. She recalls that she and Magh were members of a renowned cultural group and performed on various stages in Bangladesh. After migration, they have been involved with organising and performing in different national festivals within their community.

From when Muntasir was very young his parents observed his talent in music and always provided support. She reflects, Muntasir has been inspired by his parents' commitment to their music. She recalls that Magh used to play the harmonium with his son on his lap. Muntasir has learnt to play the harmonium from his father and has performed in different programmes arranged by his school and also by the Bangladeshi community. This practice leads him to choose to learn the keyboard and piano.

Poush relates that Muntasir started to learn to play keyboard at school and that he plays well. For the past two years, he has been learning the piano from a music school in Christchurch and has played the piano in several concerts arranged by that school. Poush shows a video of a concert: Muntasir is all dressed up, gracefully playing classical music on the piano.

Although Poush provides maximum support to learning music, she affirms that she has different expectations regarding Muntasir's professional career. She observes that Muntasir has interest in computer, especially in graphic designing: she has seen him working hard making contents for his you-tube channel. She confesses she would like it if he chooses to

study more in this field. In the discussion, she clarifies why she prefers a mainstream education to ensure a stable and secure life for him. She sees music as a very good hobby but states that it is not secure as a career. Her attitude resounds with various studies (Mbabazi, 2018; Slater, 2013; Yates & Saxelby, 2016) that have found non-western parents, especially, do not appreciate music as a career as they perceive it to be less rewarding financially and more challenging. As a first generation migrant, Poush admits, she does not want her son to have to struggle in his mature life. She states, “We are the first to come here, we had nobody who can support us, we struggled a lot. I don’t want my son to struggle in his future too. He should have a smooth career.”

### **Religion: full faith with modified practice**

Poush acknowledges her integral religious belief in Islam, although she also acknowledges that as a family they are not involved with regular prayer and religious activities. However, she reminds Muntasir as Muslims they have their own way of doing everything; from eating to using the toilet. She reports that Muntasir knows that his practice has differences from many of his friends at school.

Poush discusses her means to teach Muntasir about Islam. She explains that from a very young age Magh has taken Muntasir to the mosque on every *Jummah*. Muntasir copies his father while praying Namaz. He knows by heart some of the verses from the Quran that are needed. Poush reflects that learning to read Arabic is needed to read the Quran but it is not their first priority. She encourages Muntasir to start by reading the translations (English or Bangla) and eventually when he is ready, he can learn to read the Quran in Arabic. She provides an Islamic book written in English for teaching Muntasir the basic concepts of Islam.

She recounts how after reading the book Muntasir asked her why she does not pray five times a day and does not cover her head. She acknowledges she was not ready for that question on the time but knew the answer needed to be honest and logical for Muntasir otherwise it may make his belief unsustainable. She says, “He is a very inquisitive and intelligent boy. He was very little at that time. But I knew that I cannot make him understand by bluffing him with unreasonable talk. My answer needed to be rational enough to make him understand. Otherwise, the grey clouds would get stuck in his mind, he would feel muddled and might lose his interest in understanding our religious faith.”

She explained, she says, that a person's work is the best prayer and that because of her workload sometimes she cannot pray five times. She also explained that a person's dress may need change with a change of place: her appearance is respectful to her culture and also to the place where they now live. She does not prefer to cover her head with hijab but she always dresses decently, and she has her faith in Allah. She suggests, even if Muntasir cannot practice Islam or pray regularly, at least having faith on Allah will help him all through his life.

### **Festivals and celebrations: discussing *otherness***

Observation of festivals is an area for considered navigation. She confides that because of their religious belief the family does not celebrate Christmas. She recalls that when Muntasir was much younger it was difficult to make him understand; he always wanted to have a Christmas tree in their house and have gifts on Christmas morning like his friends.

Sometimes he used to become sad and angry when she tried to make him understand that they are Muslims and they celebrate Eid.

Poush relates that the struggle ended when Muntasir was a little bit older and had begun to read the Islamic book and understand the reasons for their celebrations. Poush reflects that he believes things more readily after reading them from a book rather than listening to a person. She adds that although they do not celebrate Christmas at home, they have never stopped their son from attending his school's Christmas celebration. Fong (2004) reported that Asian Muslim immigrants show little interest in celebrating Christmas and that may cause tension between the parents and children. Ross-Sheriff and Husain (2004) discussed how Muslim parents face difficulties in resisting their children's celebration of western holidays with Judeo-Christian origin. They added that even though the parents try to make the Islamic holidays attractive and enjoyable for the children, because of the pervading social impact of sales in shopping centres, activities at school, city decorations, special attention in media and notice of holidays in the calendar, children see them as less important.

Poush reports that they celebrate the three national days of Bangladesh every year: 21<sup>st</sup> of February, the International Mother Language Day, 26<sup>th</sup> March, the Independence Day and 16<sup>th</sup> December, the Victory Day. They organise a cultural programme and share lunch or dinner with Bangladeshi friends. They encourage their son to be involved with various activities in these programmes, for instance singing patriotic songs, reciting poems, preparing

the stage, preparing a quiz for the game show. Poush stresses these festivals are important to teach the history of Bangladesh. Besides community activities, she often tells stories of the liberation war to help him understand his parents' patriotic feelings towards their homeland.

Poush also talks about the complexity of celebration at the family level, relating how she would arrange two parties for his birthday. It was important, she says, to provide the kind of completely Bangladeshi party environment with close relatives that she had experienced in her childhood, but as there were very few Bangladeshi children in the community that party was mainly for the adults and more like a community get-together. She acknowledges that while her son cherished getting beautiful presents from his Bangladeshi uncle and aunties he best enjoyed the opportunity to party with his friends. In this regard, she reflects, since it was not a question of deeply held values, she felt it best to compromise in favour of New Zealand culture.

### **Differences in values and manners**

Poush discusses the importance of values and how they translate into manners and behaviour. She suggests that family values are the same everywhere, whether in western or eastern society: other parents from Muntasir's school are also concerned about their children's discipline, behaviour, education and overall development. She notes, however, that there are variations in how families practice their values with their children and talk about her determination to retain the value-based social practises she gained from her home.

She gives the example of things that should be private, such as the way Bangladeshi parents do not demonstrate their romantic relationship in front of their children. She reflects it is very different from the common family practice of many Kiwis. She acknowledges that she and her husband have a profound love for each other but they do not express physically intimate love in front of Muntasir. She wants to help Muntasir understand the differences in how both cultures deal with their values and understand why he should maintain Bangladeshi ways,

She gives another example in the "age inappropriate words" Muntasir's classmate used. She reflects, "Here I have experienced that most of the children know about many topics from their family a lot before their appropriate age." She explains that many of the children in Muntasir's school belong to a broken family, living weekdays with the mother and weekends with the father. Those children, she says, experience that their parents have different partners and sometimes they are changing partners. She adds that these sorts of family structures make

a strong impact on children's minds and consequently children may lack interest in marriage, family and becoming a parent. Sometimes, she says, they behave more mature than their age. She reflects that this is fairly uncommon in Bangladesh and asserts that the family environment Muntasir is given is significantly different from that of his friends and both she and her husband are determined to be strict in ensuring his knowledge is age appropriate.

Like others reported in this thesis, Poush talks about her expectation of getting a traditional daughter-in-law. She prefers a Bangladeshi girl or at least a Muslim. However, she acknowledges that she mentally prepares herself for disappointment, noting it as one of the "worst side-effects" of migration. However, in order to avoid an unsuitable marriage, she says, she discusses her expectation with Muntasir and pays careful attention to providing him with a family oriented friendly environment so that he will want to choose a person in his life with whom he can build a similar family in the future.

### **Food preferences**

Poush states that Muntasir's favourite foods are rice, dal and fried eggplant. He is habituated to only Bangladeshi food from his childhood. He does not eat any fast food. She recounts that he made a video presentation on the bad effects of fast food at his school about a year ago and she shared it on social media and got a good response from her family and friends. She voices her pride that a child of this age gathered such information and presented it clearly to a wide audience. She acknowledges it is sometimes awkward to cope with Muntasir's fussiness about foods: even when she makes a specially decorated cake for his birthday he does not eat much of it. However, she is very proud of Muntasir's choice.

### **An aspect of Bangladeshi culture to avoid**

The only aspect of Bangladeshi culture she would like to avoid, Poush says, is the rigid state of mind of her native people. She gives the example of the approach to child development: it is directive, less friendly, and parents tend to have an authoritarian relationship with their children. She reflects she has learnt a contrasting approach in New Zealand society: here people do not see everything as rigidly and do not put as much pressure on their children.

She compares the two ways: here most people let their children choose their educational goal, future career, life partner and do not criticise their decision, which is uncommon in



Bangladesh. There, children do not have the opportunity to discuss everything with their parents. She reflects that a lack of freedom to talk about things from a young age creates an invisible obstacle to independence and in later life creates a lack of confidence to make decisions. She reflects, “In my country children practically stays dependent on their parents in every aspect of their life even throughout their adulthood.” She explains that she has not reared her child in this way and that Muntasir is already much more independent in taking decisions compared to his cousins in Bangladesh. She recalls that her childhood and adulthood were far more complex and she does not want to make her son’s life complicated. She explains that she tries to make herself open for discussion about everything with her son and to receive his opinion. She gives the example of the conversations she had with Muntasir following his troubled encounter with Aden: made the following discussion she had with Muntasir: this sort of open discussion is uncommon for a Bangladeshi parent, she says. Other researchers examining sexual health education in Bangladesh (for example, Cash et al., 2001; Rashid, 2000; Roodsaz, 2018; van Reeuwijk, & Nahar, 2013) have variously noted that concepts related to sexuality are considered as *culturally sensitive, inappropriate, and vulgar* topics to discuss and are treated as *taboo*. Poush also explains that in Bangladesh sex is commonly an unmentionable topic for parents to discuss, but that she has been motivated by the openness she has learnt from New Zealand and has had that discussion.

### **Stereotyping, prejudice and racial identity**

While she is inclined to dismiss Aden’s questions as immaturity, Poush is less tolerant of adults who use harsh words and ask migrants critical questions, to migrants implying a kind of prejudice. To a point she justifies questions, saying, “The identity of a Muslim woman is stereotyped with some specific features like hijab, niqab, burqa, less education, incapable of speaking English and so on. So I understand why people make uncomfortable comments about us.” She explains that she welcomes some questions and patiently tries to make people understand not all Muslims wear a hijab. She describes how Bangladeshi Muslim women commonly did not wear a hijab a couple of decades ago, and that the costume has boomed in recent years. Abir (2018), Islam (2018) and Swapan (2016) also variously recorded how the hijab culture in Bangladesh has grown rapidly in recent years and described why it is iconic to Islam and why Bangladeshi women from various classes of society are choosing to use the veil.

Poush refuses the idea that she is being detached from her Islamic belief by not wearing a hijab and not covering herself in a typical Islamic way. To her statement that it is not traditional for Bangladeshi Islamic women, she adds that wearing a hijab is not comfortable in western countries after the Twin Tower tragedy which has an effect on New Zealand as well. Push's relatively light comments are backgrounded by various incidents reported in local news. For example, in Waikato Muslim women wearing hijab were attacked while using a public toilet ("You don't have the right to be here," 2017). The drunk attacker used abusive and racist words, threw alcohol at one of the women and attempted to hit her. Block (2019) reported a recent incident in Dunedin where a group of skinheads attacked Muslim women, unsuccessfully tearing at their hijabs. A woman who helped to stop the racist abuse stated her regret that while there were plenty of people standing there watching everything none stepped in to stop it.

Poush discusses various situations she has faced at Muntasir's school regarding her religious identity. She notes that many parents behave positively, "You'll see both sides of the coin of being a Muslim in a western society" she says. She shares one of her good experiences. One day Ashly, one of the parents from Muntasir's school, offered Poush some food. Poush declined to take the food and apologised; she explained that she was fasting for the holy month of Ramadan. Ashly did not know about Ramadan so Poush explained that as a Muslim she was fasting for the whole month from dawn to dusk without any food or water. Poush recalls, Ashly was so surprised and touched and declared that she will also stay dry by not drinking any alcohol to show respect to Poush's belief. Poush explains, "I do not expect Ashly to do it for me. I did not check whether or not she is keeping her word. But it touched me that she respects and has a positive feeling for me".

Poush is reluctant to discuss situations of conflict too much, stating, "By discussing the bad incidents the bad feelings come back to life. It is best to forget the bad events. If you cannot forget, then do not discuss." However, she does share some bitter experiences. Because of her Muslim migrant identity, she recalls, she has faced uncomfortable comments from many parents. Poush narrates one of those comments, from Isabella, by which she was hurt emotionally: Isabela commented rudely about the slaughtering process of preparing halal meat. Poush reports that she was shocked. On the day Poush did not reply but now she regrets her silence, reflecting, "In these sort of situations, we normally try to escape, to avoid the uncomfortable consequences. But it is not right. We should raise our voice as no one is going

to back us here, we are the minority. If we continue to give our statements politely, then people may understand that their words hurt us.”

Poush also recalls that Muntasir has had to face bullying from his classmates for his Muslim name. One day Jacky, she reports, a child in year four, used abusive words while making fun of Muntasir’s name. He repeatedly chanted, “M for monster, M for Muslim, M for mad and M for Muntasir”. Muntasir became very upset, another student saw him weeping and reported it to the class teacher. Muntasir came back home very sad and cried all day. The next morning Poush went to Muntasir’s school to understand what happened.

Poush recounts that Mrs Lisa, the class teacher, shared everything explaining the steps she had taken. She counselled Jacky and convinced him that it was shameful behaviour and he should never do any such act with any of his peers again. Jacky said sorry to Muntasir and wrote an apology letter too. The next week the teacher arranged a special session with all the students to discuss their names. All of them, together with their teacher, shared the meaning of their name, stories related to why they were given that name and what is the appropriate pronunciation. Poush reflects, “You see, racism can come from the family, and a nine-year-old Jacky is a result of that. We give our children to the school and we expect that the teachers will stand beside our children if anything bad happens to them. It is their responsibility to discuss every student’s distinctness. Mrs Lisa did the right thing on that day.”

### **Support from school**

Poush talks about the support she has been getting from school. The teachers recognise the religious distinctness of the Muslim students in Muntasir’s class, she says, and on every Eid, they arrange different activities like shared food and presentations. Poush appreciates the storytelling session arranged by one of the teachers who had been supportive in recognising Muntasir’s religion. She stresses, “The teacher is voluntarily arranging these sessions; it is outside her daily academic or curricular activity. It is outstanding that she is giving the effort to make every student understand their cultural uniqueness. I love her activities and some of Muntasir’s friends’ parents shared with me that it is a good practice to know about cultural diversity inside the classroom.” She reflects that any knowledge is taken more seriously when it comes from a person who is authorised to teach the children in the classroom, and the storytelling session worked well in that way.

Poush lists and acknowledges the importance of the cultural activities Muntasir had been doing at school: Bangla song performances, multicultural costume day, food day and sports day. She says that the schools are doing every positive activity to help migrant children fit into their new society. She recounts that she and her husband have concentrated mainly on teaching Muntasir about aspects of Bangladesh culture and the rest of the learning that is needed to fit into Christchurch society is mainly happening at school. She exclaims, “School teaches everything! From language to attitude, every little thing a migrant child may need to learn, he will get it from the school.” Poush reflects, “For us, the transition was easy because our child was born here. Those who bring their elder children may have a different experience. But they should rely on the school to teach their children everything accurately.”

Poush states that the school is doing enough to make her son understand the cultural complexity of this country. She offers examples: “For instance, every morning the children have to sing at least one Māori song. They have a weekly assembly where they sing the national anthem in both languages. Muntasir also has a Kapa Haka class. The teachers use a number of Māori words while giving instructions in class alongside English. Teachers always try to follow and teach some of the Māori cultural values to the students.”

### **Understanding biculturalism and the cultural nature of Christchurch**

Poush discusses her understanding of biculturalism in terms that she considers have a key connection with the indigenous Māori culture. She understands that officially New Zealand gives importance to its indigenous culture. In comparing New Zealand’s attitude to its indigenous people with other western countries like Canada, America and Australia she says, “The Māori’s status here is far above that of other indigenous peoples’ expectation”.

Although she praises the school’s bicultural activities, Poush reports that she does not find it useful to learn the Māori language as a parallel to English at school. She reflects that the school is now teaching the language in a very relaxed way, not going into detail and she appreciates this approach. She reflects that she does not see any practical use for this language in her son’s future life, and so she is happy with the current practice of the school.

In our early discussions, Poush admitted she had only very basic knowledge related to the Treaty. She relates that she has gradually developed her interest and after the marae visit arranged by the school she understands a little more. Now she knows that it is the foundation document of this country, that it was signed by the two parties: the Māori and the English,

and that Waitangi day is a national holiday which celebrates that historical event. She acknowledges the Treaty's importance in New Zealand history.

She talks about some Māori values that are also present in her traditional culture. After the marae visit, she compares the customs within the marae with her own and states, "The dress restriction, silence while prayer, these are already in my culture. I felt connected with the culture, you know! It was a good chance for us, especially the migrant parents, to have a real life experience of the indigenous culture." By acknowledging the commonalities she expresses how she feels connected to the indigenous culture.

However, she admits she has not voluntarily learned anything related to history and culture: she is reluctant to learn more as she does not see its importance in her present life. "If there is no push from the work or school," she says, "I do not feel any urge to know". She explains that as a first generation migrant, she still finds her identity is more like an outsider to this country.

Nevertheless, she states that she and her husband have been supportive to Muntasir to learn about the history of this country. Poush stresses the importance of reading and says, "Muntasir is a bookworm. The museum visits, different activities at the art gallery and city library visits from a very early age have helped him to keep his interest in reading. When he couldn't read, Magh used to read for him". She says, "Apart from his school activities, he has read many history books for children from the library and learned about biculturalism. Now he often tells me about various events of New Zealand history that I do not know!"

Poush describes the cultural features of Christchurch are occasionally multicultural. She compares Christchurch with other cities and considers that the nature of Christchurch is not to become vibrantly multicultural like them. "I don't find any problem with that," she reflects; "The important thing is, whether the city wants to become a multicultural place like London, New York, Melbourne or even like Auckland. I do not see that it wants to grow in that way."

### **Teasing out the key threads**

In Poush's account, three themes stand out most significantly: the expectation of keeping her son's native identity intact, the complexity of both tolerating and rejecting direct and indirect expressions of animosity to her religion, and the limitations of her interest in assimilating into the mainstream and of understanding New Zealand history and culture.

Poush explicitly explains that she wants to enable her son to feel and be entitled to his native culture and to receive such limited aspects of Kiwi culture which may help him to flourish in his future in New Zealand. Her support for her son's cultural education is evidenced by her long break from work to help him understand values and manners and to develop fluency in Bangla language, practice in Bangladeshi music, understanding of Muslim religion, and appreciation of Bangladeshi festivals and food.

The second issue to be examined is how Poush and her son experienced racism. She recounts that she has been made uncomfortable by comments and inquiries regarding her appearance, even though she does not wear hijab, and regarding her use of halal food. She acknowledged that these situations have made her embarrassed, nervous, angry, sad and frustrated but she explains that she usually tries to avoid confrontation and escape. The significant point is that she takes it for granted that she will experience racism as a Muslim migrant. She carefully avoids the judgement that young children at school show prejudice and accepts that the comments of Aden came out of innocent curiosity. Nevertheless, she argues that when children grow they gradually learn about racism from the adults in their home. She justifies her point by sharing the story of Muntasir being bullied for his Muslim name. Nevertheless, Poush appreciates the teacher's intervention and states that she handled the situation carefully. She repeatedly mentions that the schools are the place where the teachers can make changes in society. The complexities regarding this theme are further fricasseed in Chapter Eleven.

The third issue highlights the tendency towards ghetto-isation of migrant groups. The life this family is maintaining is more of an outsider's life. Their involvement with people who belong to a culture which is not the same or similar to their own is very slight. The relationship with the *whites*, according to Poush's term, arises mostly because of her and her husband's jobs or through Muntasir's friends. She politely criticises the different family structures (for example, single parents, parenting without marriage, parents separated) she has commonly found in Muntasir's classmates' families. She states her expectation of seeing a reflection of their traditional attitude in their son as well even though his peers are not Bangladeshi.

Poush voices respect for the history and indigenous culture of New Zealand but only sees herself within it in a very limited way. However, to make Muntasir understand about New Zealand's history and bicultural context, she and Magh have been taking him to the museum,

city library and the art gallery. Poush claims the city of Christchurch expects newcomers to reshape their identity and to fit into the cultural mould that the city has historically built. She, therefore, tends to describe Christchurch as a “growing multiracial city” where all the cultures are more or less expected to adapt to the standards of the city. She says she has no problem with this situation. Despite her reflections about the city’s minimal expression of multiculturalism, she repeatedly articulates that the schools are open to cultural diversity. She reflects also that teachers teach in their class in what she calls “a very New Zealand way”, which focuses on positive behavioural change as well as academic activities.

## Chapter Ten: Kartik



*Oporajito Kartik is the father of a son Shotto, soon to be five years old, and he lives in Christchurch on a work visa. His wife Onindita Hoimonti is a full-time post-graduate student and a casual worker at her university. The family is originally from Bangladesh and hopes to build their future in New Zealand. Kartik has been working with people with disability, for the last three years. He has his Master's degree in special education from Bangladesh and has acquired the needed New Zealand certifications for doing his current job. The couple moved to Christchurch four years ago with their toddler. At that time Hoimonti got admission for her postgraduate study with a scholarship. It was the main reason to move to Christchurch. Gradually they have grown to like the place and are now planning to settle here.*

### Learning, and teaching our son to learn

The first time experience only comes once in your life, and on that flight, we had our peaks and valleys. It was exciting to see the plane running towards our dream; it was lovely to feel that we were floating on top of the clouds.



However, Shotto, our son was not happy at all. Our grumpy little man was demanding his grandma and cousin brothers. Hoimonti had to breastfeed him most of the time in that very long flight to make him stop crying. It was exhausting. At that time, I understood that it was the forecast of our brand new struggle.

After arriving in Christchurch, Shotto was living without any friends at home; He didn't start to talk in sentences at that time; he could use some words to express his feelings. Culturally it is not an appreciated idea for a Bangladeshi to put your toddler in a preschool. We have never seen anybody doing it in Bangladesh. We were hesitating, but Shotto was getting sad and angry. He was getting grumpier; he used to cry a lot.

The little man was unhappy for not playing with his brothers, not holding his grandma's face. Skype calls were not enough for him to fill the hollow; he used to touch the screens of the computer to actually touch the faces and then started crying.

We decided to put him in the university preschool to have some new friends. Shotto had to wait for four months to get his position in the preschool and to get his actual play time with real kids. At that time it was expensive for us to pay the hourly charges, but we did it for his wellbeing. Our son started his preschool when he was twenty-seven months old. It took a couple of weeks for him to get used to the preschool environment. And after that, he started to enjoy it. He will turn five soon and he is very excited to start primary school.

In Bangladesh, I was an Inclusion Officer in a reputed INGO that works in a collaboration with UNHCR. I have good experience in my job field. But when you suddenly migrate to a new country, it is way difficult to find a job that you like and you need to take a job that will help you earn money and survive. The first nine months after our move, I did the same. Then I got my current job.

My pay is not much but enough to bring food for my family and pay the bills. The positive side of my current job is it has a growth. And it gives me satisfaction because I am still working for the people with disability, which is my actual study and career line. I miss my past job in Bangladesh but I feel it is the opportunity cost to get an expected future for me and my family. I am strong, young and have faith in me. I know I can build a better career along with a better lifestyle, here in New Zealand.

It is important for a migrant family to pass the native culture to the future generation. It is their contribution to the cultural diversity of the host country. We believe that for a migrant child both of the cultures are equally important. We are not trying to place Bangladeshi culture in any higher or lower position to New Zealand's culture. We acknowledge that both of the sides have distinctness and none of it should have the superiority in an immigrant child's mind. But we are intentionally promoting our native culture in the home and in our ethnic community to practice it. It is because firstly we know it better and secondly our home is the main source for Shotto to learn about his culture of origin.

We are still very uncommon for the Kiwis. It happened to me many times that I had to explain to the others that we have a separate country, we are not a part of India.

Bangla is our language, it preserves our emotions, and our ancestors sacrificed their lives to keep this language. It has always been our pride and honour. It is beyond our imagination that our son would not be understanding or talking in Bangla. It is not only for our emotion, but we have also done our research for Shotto's betterment. My wife's sister was a preschool teacher here. She advised us to practice Bangla at home. We asked Shotto's preschool teachers too. They all suggested nurturing the native language. We have read some of the articles that said that bilingual children are having better cognitive development. So we decided to practice Bangla at home.

It is hard to say whether Bangla is going to be his first language or not when he will get older. It is his mother tongue and his parents' first language. Right now, he is well efficient in Bangla and English, both of the languages.

Our food is hot. If a child is not habituated, it is difficult to make him love Bangladeshi food later. So Shotto eats Bangladeshi food regularly at dinner time. With his right hand, in the Bangladeshi traditional way. But at breakfast and lunch, he eats Kiwi foods. Sometimes I cook mince and cheese pie, or a beef casserole with mashed potatoes and steamed veggies. The only two famous Kiwi items we avoid are pork and wine because of our religion.

People in Bangladesh often say that those who brought up abroad do not know how to behave; they do not have the etiquette and manners. This perception puts huge

pressure on immigrant parents' way of parenting. And we have to be careful with what we teach. Every culture has its bright and dark sides.

In Bangladesh, most people are of Bangladeshi origin and speak Bangla. We are really monocultural. Here there are many cultures. We must get involved with the idea of multiculturalism. From food to clothes, from language to attitude, in every sector, we have had to learn and adapt to multiple cultures.

I have often experienced less discrimination here than in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh people gets different status and respect on the basis of many things, for instance on the basis of sex, income, socio-economic class, urban-rural, religion, caste, education facility, outlook, profession, political power and so on.

People in Bangladesh often say that the people in western or the 'rich white' countries are racists. I do not disagree, but I think people do a lot more racism in their native land than they do realise. And I think people in Bangladesh are far more racist than the Kiwis.

The teachers knew very little about our country and Shotto was the first student from Bangladesh they ever had in their preschool. The teachers were always positive to us and helpful to teach him the language. They never demotivated us to teach Shotto Bangla. It was huge support I think.

On Shotto's first few weeks of preschool, the teacher learnt a list of Bangla word to instruct Shotto in Bangla. In this way, Shotto got a sense of security as well. The teachers were great! We do not expect that they will teach the Bangladeshi cultural aspects at school but I would expect similar positivity in his primary school as well. Hope for the best.

Biculturalism was a completely new phrase to me after migration. It is huge that this country is giving a lot of importance to its indigenous group of people. In Bangladesh, we also have fifty or more small ethnic groups. Most of them are deprived and living in a disadvantaged environment compared to the other Bangladeshis. It is a shame for us.

I now understand that the Māori are the Tangata Whenua, the original people of this land and I believe with all the ups and downs, they have got their rights to celebrate their originality. We are representing a big group of population in New Zealand; we are the immigrants. It is our responsibility to understand and respect this country's indigenous culture and make ourselves involved with the weaving of its bicultural growth.

Many Māori words and instructions are used frequently alongside English in the preschool. In this way, Shotto is also beginning learning the Māori language.

Shotto often uses 'Horoia Ō Ringaringa' which means 'Wash Your Hands'. His mother also uses some of the instructions from school to make a school-like environment at home. For instance, sometimes she calls him to come inside home saying 'Haere mai' which means come or welcome.

It is not the list of activities Shotto is learning from the school, it is the holistic environment that teaches him all about his current cultural place.

### **Opening up to the new**

To me, the most interesting part of Kartik's story is that it tells about how he as an immigrant parent recognises himself as a continuous learner and how he is teaching his son to become one.

Kartik's account of the journey to New Zealand highlights both the excitement and the anxiety of migration. This was the family's first ever flight. Kartik and his wife saw it as the passage to their hopes for the future. It was also a wrenching away from family and habitudes of daily life they were used to. Kartik describes the wrench in terms of its effect on his son. Sotot spent the first 20 months of his life in a joint family: one where his grandparents, his aunt, uncle, cousins, his parents and he lived together in a roomy shared apartment. This, as Kartik explains in one of our interviews, is not an uncommon situation in Bangladesh and many young couples prefer to live in a joint family not only for economic reasons but also because of the support and leadership that elders give young parents. As Kartik explains, this was a loss the family faced as they boarded the plane towards a new, different life. Hagan, MacMillan and Wheaton (1996) described familial connections as *community social capital*

and studied the loss of such capital as an effect of migration. They found such loss was strongest in families with uninvolved fathers and mothers. In an Australian study Renzaho, Dhingra and Georgeou (2017) found that migrant families conceptualised family capital in terms of solidarity, influence, and control as well as intergenerational transmission of knowledge, social norms, and cultural identity. They argued the need for an inter-generational approach when dealing with youth negotiating the complexity of forging their cultural identity. One of the great challenges facing Kartik and his wife was how to continue the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values without the actual presence of the joint family. Thus the newness they had to face was not nor only that of different cultures, different languages, different ways of behaviour, different job expectations and opportunities but also a totally new way of carrying responsibility for their son's development.

### **Accepting the need for new solutions**

Kartik reports that he had a career path in Bangladesh that was satisfying and offered promotional prospects. His position as an Inclusion Officer in a reputed international NGO had come after completing his study in the same field. Like many other migrants, he experienced a shock at finding he could not readily transfer to similar work in the new country. He is realistic, however, and knows he needs to get work of any kind to survive. His first job was a manual one, moving the stock in a grocery supply chain, and completely out of his previous experience. For the first few weeks, he had pain all over his body. He acknowledges that he found it so hard because he was not habituated to physical work, but also reports that at the end of the work week, when the money came into his bank, he would get his smile back. It took more than a hundred job applications, he reports, to get his current job. It is still well below the level of responsibility he held in Bangladesh, but it allows him to work in the field of disability and he explains that he sees it as a gateway to further both his professional development and his career.

For a middle-class university graduate to work as a manual labourer would be unthinkable in Bangladesh, but the challenge faced by Kartik is one that has been faced by generations of immigrants around the world. Some, like Kartik, see the challenge as an unavoidable consequence of coming into a different world. A recent study (Hussain, 2018) of middle-class Indian migrants to New Zealand found that many are principally motivated by lifestyle rather than economic factors and they have experienced a lack of recognition of their qualifications

and a number of them have experienced downward mobility. Other migrants, internationally, have been exploited because of their vulnerable status. New Zealand has a minimum wage policy (Neumark & Wascher, 2004) and so there are limitations to the extent that its labour market can capitalise on low-wage migrant labour. Nevertheless as McCollum and Findlay (2017) argue, a trend exists across western countries for entrepreneurs to profitably connect the ready supply of migrants seeking work to capital's demand for low-wage workers. It is noteworthy that job insecurity and the loss of professional status makes families and their children vulnerable and it is therefore arguably important for schools to be sensitive to the stresses involved.

Together with the challenge of adjusting to a new way of regarding himself as a worker, Kartik needed to re-think the place for his son. As his account shows, the idea of pre-school at such an early age initially felt quite alien. In Bangladesh, a boy of Shotto's age would be cared for by his grandparents, other relatives or a maid within the home if his mother was working, and would be constantly surrounded by cousins and other families. But Shotto was desperately missing family and becoming silent. Kartik reports that he and his wife, Hoimonti, became worried when Shotto stopped using some of the words he used to use in Bangladesh. Hoimonti would take Shotto to the nearest park regularly, but that did not give him enough time to play and he needed friends. The decision to enrol him in a pre-school centre was costly and required a degree of hopeful courage, Kartik recalls, but it gradually enabled Shotto to acquire friends from many different nationalities. It also created a basis from which Kartik and Hoimonti could teach Shotto to navigate between the culture of his birth and the world he now lives in.

### **Preserving Shotto's native culture without locking him away from his new world**

Kartik stresses the importance of migrant parents passing on their native culture to their children. He explains that it is important to the children's well-being as well as being a contribution to New Zealand's cultural diversity. Because he and his wife value their native culture, they want to see their son also gain that love. Kartik explains that they want Shotto to absorb and welcome the key aspects of Bangladeshi culture without becoming entrapped by it and closing off from the world he now lives in. Since pre-school introduces him to the culture of New Zealand, it is the parents' task, Kartik says, to teach him his culture of origin. Kartik reports that at home he and his wife give emphasis on the aspects of their native culture that

they value most: language, food, festivals, dress, music, dance, poems, stories, fairy-tales, customs and manners. This is particularly important, he says, because there are comparatively few people from Bangladesh living in Christchurch. Those who are in the city are almost all first generation migrants and many of them are students. There are no Bangladeshi shops, and Kartik goes to the Indian shops to find slightly familiar items. Although he gently complains about needing to constantly explain that Bangladesh is not part of India, he feels heartened that people are beginning to know about his country through the Bangladeshi cricket team and the garments industry. However, he points out that, due to the smallness of the population, the characteristics of Bangladeshis are not as familiar to Christchurch Kiwis as to people in other cities like Auckland, Melbourne, Sydney, New York or London.

### **The importance of the first language**

Kartik explains the careful thinking he and his wife have done about what language to use in the home. Their own first language is Bangla. Shotto had not started talking when they arrived in Christchurch, but he could understand the instructions his parents gave him. Within weeks of arrival, the couple got different suggestion about the use of language at home. Some said not to use Bangla at all, that it would make his little mind confused and he would underachieve at his school. Others advised using Bangla only, to prevent its loss from his life. Their parents suggested using both languages, and Hoimonti's mother, a former high school teacher, suggested articles about bilingual children (Hakuta, 1990; Volterra & Taeschner, 1978; NYSED, 2015; Islam, 2013). Kartik and his wife read the articles, discussed them and decided to use mainly Bangla at home. The decision felt all the better, Kartik reports, because Bangla is the language that can express their emotions and that holds their sense of cultural pride. Shotto's pre-school teachers reinforced the decision

It is noteworthy that a key strand in New Zealand's framework for early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2017) stipulates that "the languages and symbols of [children's] own and other cultures are [to be] promoted and protected" (p. 42). It is still, however, a challenge for early childhood centres to find resources and strategies to meet this goal for the various immigrant children (Beauchamp, 2016; Shuker & Cherrington, 2016). Certainly, the collaboration of parents is a vital resource.

Kartik reports that the process of teaching Shotto to be bilingual was not always easy. He had a small amount of vocabulary when he was nearly three. He understood everything, readily

taking directions, but expressed himself mainly in nonverbal gestures. His mother became concerned and visited a doctor visit to discuss his speech development. The doctor said that it is quite common for a bilingual child to start talking late. And indeed, Kartik recalls, Shotto started using more meaningful sentences just after his third birthday and now it is hard to stop him talking. Kartik points out that Shotto is now fluent in both languages. He notes that sometimes he does not use verbs correctly when speaking in English, but explains that is not a cause of worry. However, the complexities of bilingual development may worry other parents, and it is a challenge for pre-schools and schools in New Zealand to develop strategies to support immigrant parents in developing their children's first and second languages.

Kartik talks about the resources the couple use to teach their son both languages. His mother sings songs to him and tells him stories. Kartik explains that he and Hoimonti are both singers, and his wife is a dancer. "We do not sing any defined lullaby for him," he says. "We have always sung a good song with good melody to develop his music taste as well as to teach him different words, and it helped to increase his vocabulary." Shotto has a regular storybook time in the afternoon and both parents read books with him, putting their finger on the word to develop his understanding that these stories are written in printed words. "When he started to learn the letters," Kartik says, "we might tell him to find out all the 'A's on that page. We do the same for Bangla books also." But Kartik points out that learning to read in Bangla will take more time for Shotto than English, as the written language of Bangla is more difficult. He explains that Bangla has two different sets of alphabets. There is a set of 11 vowels (Shoroborno<sup>53</sup>) and a set of 39 consonants (Banjonborno<sup>54</sup>). Then the didactic form of the vowels to be learned, then joint words and their punctuation. "It took a lot of time for us to learn it," says Kartik, "even in Bangladesh with a school environment that taught in Bangla. But here he will learn it from home."

Kartik explains how he and his wife take time to teach Shotto the meaning of various Bangla words and their English equivalents. He offers an example: "Now we are teaching Shotto to be *shadheen*<sup>55</sup> or independent. It is a very deep word for a young boy to understand. So we always use both of the words and explain what will make him independent and what will not. For instance, he still wants his parents to help him eat at dinner time. If he is too tired at

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<sup>53</sup> স্বরবর্ণ

<sup>54</sup> ব্যঞ্জনবর্ণ

<sup>55</sup> স্বাধীন



night, we help him but while helping, we tell him that it is making him dependent and that primary school students need to be independent. On the first few days, he used to argue, but now he understands. He is very excited to go to school. Now sometimes he spontaneously tells us ‘I do not need any help! I am independent!’ ”

### **Food and festivals - from both cultures and others**

Living between cultures involves more than language. Food is another difference.

“Bangladeshi food and Kiwi food,” says Kartik, “are as different as day and night.” Kartik recounts that in his workplace, he often has to cook for his clients. He has learnt the Kiwi style of food preparation from work and also tasted food from various local restaurants, so he is happy to experiment with both kinds of cooking. “In Bangladeshi food,” he says, “we use a lot of spices; in fact, sometimes it is all about the spices. You can find turmeric, chilli, cumin, coriander and onion in most of the savoury items. On top of that, we use ginger, garlic, a wide range of garam masala, traditional herbs and so on. So all of these spices change the food’s original taste. Both are beautiful if you know to cook, but totally different.” The parents do not want to leave their comfort zone but also do not want to make Shotto become uncomfortable with Kiwi food. So they decided to also bring the Kiwi style foods to their dining table.

Kartik talks about teaching Shotto to eat rice or roti in a Bangladeshi traditional way, acknowledging that it is not an easy job to eat rice with the bare hand. Sometimes Shotto creates a mess but his parents guide him to hold and eat the food properly. “It is our tradition,” says Kartik. “Now he may find it difficult but he will learn.” When they all eat any Kiwi style food at home or in a restaurant, they use spoons, forks and knives as needed. Kartik adds that Shotto takes fruits, yoghurt, sandwiches, noodles and crackers for lunch at pre-school. “Shotto likes outdoor activity,” Kartik says. “He loves running, climbing, cycling. He needs energy. But he eats slowly. So we always try to give him the foods which are easy to finish as well as healthy.”

Festivals are also significant markers of culture. Kartik explains that the family celebrates the three national days (Independence Day, International Mother Language Day, Victory Day), as well as *Boshonto Utshob* the Spring Festival and *Pohela Boishakh*, the first day of Bangla calendar. The religious festivals they celebrate are the two Eids. They also celebrate *Durga Puja*, the main religious festival of the Hindu community in Bangladesh.

For the national day celebrations, the family often joins with the local Bangladeshi community, which arranges a cultural programme following a shared dinner or lunch. Kartik recounts that Shotto loves performing on those days. He prepares a song and a poem, rehearses with his mother and then performs on stage holding the microphone. Shotto's parents also perform. Kartik is a guitarist and he loves singing. Hoimonti sings and dances. So before every programme, their home takes on the mood of celebration while practising. Kartik says, "It feels like we are still in Bangladesh and preparing ourselves for the stage like we used to do."

Kartik explains that as well as Bangladeshi festivals the family enjoys the Christmas, New Year, Diwali and Matariki festivals. They go to church to have a Christmas experience. "We are not Christians, so we go to any church, whichever is suitable for our schedule," says Kartik. He explains that Christmas is a government holiday in Bangladesh but it is not a big festival and it is mostly the Christian community that celebrates it. "Non-Christians enjoy the holiday but do not go to the church or do any special activity to celebrate the day. Therefore the Christmas celebration is a completely new addition in our life. We also go to the Christchurch Christmas lighting and take Shotto to the Santa parade. This year we participated, representing Bangladesh in our community team. We loved it. We also decorate our home with a Christmas tree, decorations and lighting. Shotto gets a gift. He also attends the Christmas party at his preschool. It is the gorgeous festival of Christchurch! We try to enjoy as much as we can. Do all the parties; buy lots of stuff on Boxing Day."

In addition, Diwali and Matariki are celebrated by the family. For Matariki, the family plants a tree, and Shotto has begun to take responsibility of nurturing it. "We presented Shotto with a yellow set of gardening tools," says Kartik "Yellow is his favourite colour. He is serious about gardening and enjoys watering his plants every day."

However, the biggest religious festivals are the Eids. "The first Eid is the Eid al Fitr that comes after the month of fasting," Kartik explains. "The whole month is full of excitement in Bangladesh. You will do the shopping for everybody. And the second Eid, the Eid al Adha, is the one when we sacrifice an animal in the name of Almighty Allah. You can find big posters and billboards advertising a *huge cow and goat shop* everywhere in the month before the Eid al Adha. We used to go to those pop-up animal shops and choose the cow or goat we would sacrifice. In Bangladesh, the Eid days start with very early morning special prayers in a huge gathering. After the prayer, I would to come back home with my father, touch his foot to do

*Eid salaam* and have a delicious meal together.” He explains that Eid salaam is the tradition whereby they would touch the feet of their elders to receive blessings. On the second Eid, Kartik recounts, he would be busy managing the sacrificing procedure. Then he and his family would visit friends and wider family and pass the day in a spirit of fun. With a little nostalgia, he says, “Here we are having bland Eids. It is the festival of a small minority group here. There is no public holiday. So you need to take leave from work if you want to celebrate. And most sadly it is not possible for you to see or touch the feet of your parents and close ones when you are living abroad.”

Kartik explains that despite being in Christchurch, he and his wife practise fasting for the whole month and break their fast with Iftar. On some days, because of his roster, Kartik breaks his fast at his work. The day before Eid al Fitr, he and Hoimonti cook various delicious foods. Hoimonti puts henna on her and Shotto’s hands. In the early morning of Eid, Kartik takes a shower, puts on traditional Eid dress and shares morning Eid prayer with other Bangladeshi community people. From last year Shotto joins his father. Shotto enjoys wearing the Eid *panjabi*<sup>56</sup> and announces that he looks like a prince from his fairy-tale. Then father and son come back home, have breakfast and talk with their loved ones in Bangladesh by Skype. Then they host and are hosted by friends and share the greetings of Eid.

Because Hoimonti has informed the preschool about Shotto’s absence for Eid, the teachers arranged a special mat time for all the children to discuss Eid and Shotto’s celebration. “I felt happy,” Kartik says, “to see that teachers putting good effort into encouraging the celebration of every child’s festival.”

The family wears Bangladeshi clothing on various gatherings with the Bangladeshi community. Kartik wears *panjabi* or <sup>57</sup>*fotua* with *pyjama*<sup>58</sup> or pants on those festivals and at home, he wears the traditional *lungi* regularly in the summertime. “For me, my clothing style did not change with our migration,” he says. “Hoimonti’s clothes changed completely. In Bangladesh, she used to wear *salwar-kameez* or *sharee*. Now she mostly wears pants and shirts or a dress. You can see hardly any South Asians wearing their ethnic outfits in Christchurch. The weather is too cold. And you will not also feel good if you look different.”

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<sup>56</sup> Traditional dress for the men in Bangladesh. It is a tunic. Also known as long Kurta, in different places of South Asia

<sup>57</sup> Short Kurta

<sup>58</sup> Pair of trousers. It is a set to be worn with the Kurta.

Kartik explains that Shotto likes to copy his father's *lungi*<sup>59</sup>. He understands, however, that ethnic clothes are for home or special occasions. "Both of us," Kartik acknowledges, "love our jeans for outside."

Foods and festivals are recognised as publicly performed affirmations and re-creations of culture (Schechner, 1985; Handelsman, 1990). Kartik uses both to take his son through the lived experience of learning and affirming his birth culture. In addition, he is actively exploring the foods and festivals of the country he now lives in and is teaching his son to enjoy and appreciate these too. In these ways, he is gently teaching his son to understand how differences have their own embedded values and helping him navigate his own relationship to the differences that surround him.

### **Developing values and etiquette**

Kartik repeatedly acknowledges the pressure of maintaining important cultural values while away from the country that sustains the culture. "Every place develops some significant way of expression, some distinct customs and manners for its people," he says. "It is the land, time and its evolving communities who create those manners. Our country has many distinct customs and manners that we have been brought up with, but it is hard to identify them all individually." He mentions some of the more striking differences from Kiwi manner that he has noticed: "Inside Bangladesh, a handshake, hugging or kissing on the cheeks are not common ways of greeting a new person. Touch comes with the depth of the relationship, especially if it is between a man and a woman. We eat with our right hand; prefer not talking at the dinner table. We avoid touching anyone with our foot, it is disrespectful. If it happens, we touch that person with our hand and do the salaam; it is a courtesy of apologising and respecting. We must not wear outside shoes at home. For us guests are blessings and we welcome and treat them anytime. We do not raise our voice to the elders, we do not say 'no' directly. It is our custom to start anything with the blessings of the elders, and we give a lot of importance to the elders' opinion when making any decision."

Kartik becomes thoughtful as he acknowledges that is a dilemma in how much children of immigrants should acquire customs and manners which are significantly different from the ones they are meeting in the land where they are being brought up. He stresses that it is

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<sup>59</sup> A type of sarong popularly worn in South Asian countries.

important to make children understand the reason for the customs and be careful in choosing what habitual practices to pass on. On the one hand, he confesses to a sense of hollowness inside when he thinks about his ability to pass important values to his son without living in the country where they are widely endorsed. “You start to rethink whether you have made the right choice to move,” he says. He and Hoimonti teach their son to understand some of the practices their extended family do and explain to him how to use them. Shotto knows that he will need to greet a Bangladeshi community person by saying Assalamu alaikum. He speaks in Bangla with them. He uses his right hand while eating. He tries not to touch anyone with his foot. He never gets into a house with his shoes on. Every morning he says some incantation aloud. It starts with two self-motivating Bangla poems<sup>60</sup> and ends with a small prayer to Allah.

Kartik explains that his family is Muslim by birth and that they have an enduring trust in their religion, but that they are not strictly practising. He can read the Holy Quran in Arabic but does not understand what is written: for understanding he has to read the English or Bangla translation. Hoimonti reads the translation. “Hoimonti mostly prays in Bangla and she does it whenever she feels like it,” Kartik relates. “She says she talks with Allah like her invisible friend. She shares her feelings with the Almighty; she apologises if she does any harm to human and nature. She believes that becoming a good human is enough to make Allah happy. I respect her thought. We both want Shotto to read the holy Quran but he needs to be mature

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সকালে উঠিয়া আমি মনে মনে বলি, সারাদিন আমি যেন ভাল হয়ে চলি। আদেশ করেন যাহা মোর গুরুজনে, আমি যেন সেই কাজ করি ভালমনে।	I wake up in the morning and promise in my mind I am going to be good all day The guidance of the knowledgeable others I should keep following them with a pleasant mind.
এই করিনু পণ মোরা এই করিনু পণ, ফুলের মত গড়ব মোরা মোদের এই জীবন। হাসব মোরা সহজ সুখে সুবাস রবে লুকিয়ে বুকে, মোদের কাছে এলে সবার জুড়িয়ে যাবে মন।	It is our promise We will bloom our life like the flower. We will be happy and smile easily And will keep the fragrance as a treasure, Whoever comes close to us, will get that eternal essence and the pleasure.
	Dear Allah, please give me knowledge, wisdom and education. Please give peace to everybody's mind. Give me the strength to love all. Help me to be a better human, Ameen

enough to be able to understand what is written. I think it is important to understand besides being able to recite. To understand the inner meaning, Shotto needs maturity.”

As he talks more about his own learning of the Quran and what he wants his son to learn, Kartik proposes that at this stage of Shotto’s life humanity is more important than religious practice. He reports that he and his wife are concentrating more on developing their son’s human quality. With quiet confidence, he states, “Shotto believes that Allah is everywhere, watches everything. He created parents to help the children to grow in the right manner. To become a good human being who contributes to the wellbeing of nature.” He explains, “His mother would take him to the park and put his hand gently on top of the flowers to honour them, saying ‘Look the flowers are smiling at you. The plants are alive and if you tear off a leaf and flower, they will cry from inside.’ Now whenever he goes to any garden, he softly touches the flower and sometimes says thanks. Normally children of his age in my country never do that. We are proud of Shotto.”

When asked whether he has expectations about his son’s marriage, Kartik takes time to explain his thoughts about the complexities the future might bring. He first talks about how important marriage is in Bangladeshi cultural context. “Marriage gets huge attention. In most of the cases, the parents find the life partners for their children: they arrange the marriage. Love marriage is not uncommon but the wedding is still commonly arranged under the supervision of the parents; otherwise, it will not be socially accepted. Taking parents’ consent has huge importance. In Bangladesh marriage bonds two families, not two people.

The wedding itself is treated as one of the greatest events of a person’s life. Usually, parents save money throughout their lives to spend on their children’s wedding. In our wedding reception, over 500 guests were invited. That is an average number. Many people invite thousands of guests. In my sister-in-law’s wedding, over 1500 people were invited.”

Then he goes on to acknowledge that he and his wife would like to arrange the wedding ceremony for their son, but not to make the choice of partner for him. “It is Shotto’s life,” he says. “He will live his life with his partner, with or without marriage. He should live with the girl who he will love, who will be a good person, care him and will hold him in his ups and downs. That girl may belong to any culture, race, religion and country. We will support our son. However, if he marries, as his parents, we feel it is our right to celebrate his big decision. We will feel honoured if he gives us that pleasure to arrange his wedding ceremony.”

Kartik is very specific about developing Shotto's interest in girls. He confesses that a same-sex relationship is out of his imagination. He reports, however, that his wife does not share his conviction. "She tells me she will be happy if Shotto is happy," he says. "She always says 'it doesn't matter whether that person is man or women, old or young, black or white: it is their life; we should be the supporter, not the controller.' I am not ready to agree with her. But that is still for a future time."

While a strong measure of ambivalence is evident in Kartik's attitude to what cultural teaching he should pass on to his son about marriage, there is little hesitation in his rejection of some cultural beliefs. He smiles briefly when asked if there is anything of his native culture he does not want to teach his son. "Yes, plenty," he says. He reflects that living outside his native land allows his family to avoid some of the darker sides of its culture. Prejudices and superstition come rapidly to mind. "It is the twenty-first century," he says, "and still many well-educated people in Bangladesh embrace a lot of superstitions and religious dogma. I do not want my son to become like them." He quickly itemises a list of practices: "Do not put one spoon of food on your plate; you will fall on the water. Always make it a two. Ladies, do not go outside without covering your head in the evening. Do not call a person from his back; it will bring bad faith. Do not follow or play with your shadow; it will take you towards evil. It is sinister if you trip on something while going outside. If you break a mirror, you are going to have misfortune for a year. If you bite yourself while eating, somewhere someone is angry with you and maybe cursing you. If you see one bird you will have sorrow. If a black cat crosses the road before you, you are going to face huge trouble. If a pregnant lady goes out in a lunar or solar eclipse, the child may have a bad fortune or may have a cleft lip. If you unintentionally get a bay leaf on your plate, you will have a partner who has dark skin. If you eat an egg on your breakfast of the day of your exam you will get a bad score. If you change your seat at a dinner table, your marriage may delay. You are not welcomed in blessing a bride or groom in their pre-wedding ceremonies if you are a widow, divorced or barren."

Growing increasingly thoughtful, Kartik states, "Fanaticism is deeply seeded in the community and many religious fundamentalists use those beliefs as capital to control the less educated people, mostly in the rural area. Unfortunately, many of the higher educated, brought up in the urban setting also have similar fears."

Kartik reflects that it would have been difficult for him and his wife to prevent their son from acquiring these traditional misconceptions if he was growing inside their home country, Bangladesh. Migration, therefore, is a good opportunity to create an environment at home that avoids such fallacies. “We named him Shotto,” Kartik says thoughtfully. “In Bangla, it means the truth. We do not want him to muddle his life trusting many hypocrites who introduce themselves as a religious messenger and use peoples’ innocent trust and cheat them.”

It is significant that Kartik identifies judgement and choice as key factors in his approach to cultural transmission. His account highlights how he has used his migration as a means to question, critique and re-value elements of his own culture and to explore, adapt and in some way value aspects of the culture into which he has come. He wants to preserve, he wants to adopt - but at the same time, he recognises the need to consider, question and select. He has set out to teach his son to do so as well.

### **Reaching out to multiculturalism**

One area that Kartik identifies as new to him is the experience of multiculturalism. He is aware that the presence of him and his family may represent multiculturalism to Kiwis. To him, it means meeting with and finding relationships with a wide range of different cultures- in his neighbourhood, his work, his wife’s place of study and his son’s pre-school. “We got the idea in Bangladesh from various books and digital media, but most of the people in our country are Bangladeshi. Here we have made relationships with a range of Kiwis. Some have become like family. And have found friends who are migrants from different countries including Scotland, Fiji, Nigeria, Colombia, Indonesia, India, Nepal, Korea, Vietnam, Philippines. Perhaps it is because there are not so many Bangladeshis in this city. And perhaps we just want to learn about different cultures.” Kartik affirms that he values the way the cultural mix they live in is helping Shotto to develop a sense of cultural diversity.

Kartik then talks about how he thinks his son is developing a sense of being a global citizen and makes sense of all the differences around him. “We do regular video conferencing with the extended family members living outside New Zealand. Shotto has cousins in Bangladesh, Australia, Canada and America. He often talks with his cousins. They talk in Bangla and English. Sometimes they teach each other the new words they have learnt from Māori, Spanish, Hindi and Arabic. They seem to have created their own world to talk about that is



completely new to their parents. We never had this sort of relationship and discussion with our cousins when we were children. It is wonderful the way they are managing to span such huge geographical distances and create a world they can share.”

Kartik adds that for him multiculturalism is not just about appreciating the difference in others. It is also about changes he can make. He recounts that he has learned to cook in New Zealand. “In Bangladesh, it is not very common for a man to work in the kitchen. Living in a traditional joint family there was no need for me to help in the kitchen, and on the whole, it is not welcomed in our society. Here I’ve become quite a decent cook. Hoimonti loves it when I serve quiche and she says I make delicious pies and lasagne. I am happy about that. It is a life skill, and everybody should know cooking. My son is growing up watching both of his parents working together in the kitchen. He will learn to do the same.”

Kartik’s account of his understanding of multiculturalism suggests a grounded experiential interpretation of the concept. In his explanation, multiculturalism offers a potential meeting ground for many kinds of difference, a space he and his family can go out to and perhaps learn from, but also a space he can retreat from to return to his own home where he and his family can choose how to navigate the differences between the culture they want to keep and those that they could be enriched by. It is not a definition of his identity or a marker of where he fits within the city of Christchurch. It is something to be explored. It may be learned from but it does not demand his conformity.

Kartik’s narrative suggests multiculturalism as a space of potential, rather than a restrictive political imperative, a space that is continuously evolving, unpredictable because it depends on what people bring to it and on what they do within it. Such an approach to multiculturalism aligns with Greenwood and Wilson (2006) who discuss New Zealand-ness as something that is being sewed together (p. 87) from disparate, individually authentic fragments of material, and with Greenwood (2016) who proposes multiculturalism as a yet uncharted space to be danced into. A further congruent metaphor is found in the children’s picture book (Grace, 1984) where a magical eel brings culturally associated gifts to all the ethnically diverse children in a working-class street and the children come out of their separate houses and dance.

### **Finding a way to understand the bicultural space in New Zealand**

Kartik moves readily to talking about the concept of biculturalism. Before coming to New Zealand, he admits, he had no understanding of Māori people other than as a minority group.

If he thought about them at all, it was in terms of his previous experience of indigenous tribal groups in Bangladesh who are overtly acknowledged but who remain largely disadvantaged within the mainstream system (Chakma, 2010; Hall & Patrinos, 2012). His training in his workplace, his wife's experiences at her university and above all the attitudes of his son's pre-school teachers allowed him to learn more. He reports that after his arrival in New Zealand, he found that different tribes of the indigenous Māori population were getting officially equal rights as New Zealanders. Their culture was being promoted in media, education, and in every aspect of life. He learned the term *tangata whenua*, and learned that it means the original people of this land and that originality gives them significant rights. "I learned that the indigenous Māori people have been deprived by the Pākehā settlers for ages," he says, "but because of the Treaty of Waitangi, they got and still getting their rights back."

Kartik recounts that he learned about the Treaty principles through workshops he attended for certifications in his workplace. "Providing equal support gets a lot of importance in my workplace," he says. "And I think in every work it gets similar attention." However, he reflects that Māori are still holding low status in the community, and suggests this is because of the long struggles to getting their rights back. He considers this will change in a few generations. He states that as an immigrant he and his family understand the importance of respecting the bicultural identity of New Zealand and that they willingly get involved with activities that officially promote biculturalism. He argues that immigrants represent a significant proportion of the population of New Zealand and so he and others have responsibilities to the indigenous people and so contribute to the development of the country's bicultural growth.

Unlike some others in this study, Kartik has been given structured opportunities to learn about the position of Māori as indigenous people of the land, the Treaty of Waitangi and the concept of biculturalism. To that, he is able to add his own observations of what he hears on the news, and what he sees at work and in his daily life in Christchurch. His account reflects the way he has actively sought to not only understand a social concept that is different from his native experience but also tried to integrate the implications into his work and life. His explanations show that he sees his family and other immigrants as inside the bicultural relationship rather than as outsiders looking on.

As discussed in Chapter Four, there is often both popular and academic debate that places the concepts of biculturalism and multiculturalism in opposition (Bedford, Ho, & Lidgard, 2002;

De Bres, 2003). It may be said that multiculturalism is a description of the realities of population and that biculturalism is a definition of New Zealand's nationhood and societal obligations and commitments. Sometimes the assertion of New Zealand as a multicultural country is a means to side-step bicultural obligations (Sibley & Ward, 2013). Conversely, it is argued that multiculturalism fits comfortably into biculturalism as biculturalism "is about the states' founding cultures [and] multiculturalism is about the acceptance of cultural difference generally" (Durie, 2005, p.1). Kartik and his family may yet have more to experience and explore but his account in this study suggests that he is comfortably accommodating the notion of a multicultural society within a nation that positions itself politically, and perhaps in time fully functionally, as bicultural.

### **Discrimination?**

When asked about whether he has experienced discrimination in New Zealand, Kartik shrugs off the question with a laugh and says, "Discrimination is something that has existed throughout human history. You will find it every place on the earth." He considers for a moment and then states that he has experienced less discrimination in Christchurch than in Bangladesh. Then he talks about the *Methor* or *Dalits* in Bangladesh, the people who work cleaning the streets and sweeping human rubbish away. "They have a separate place to live in the city," he says. "They work in the dirt and garbage, to make the city look clean but most of the people still treat them as *untouchable*. A child of a sweeper in Bangladesh becomes a sweeper, it is their only identity." He pauses again, then adds, "If I start to tell the stories of how people discriminate in Bangladesh, it will be another whole area to study. I love my country but it is not flawless - no place in the world is. It cannot be changed overnight, it is how it is. I can only make a change in my family, and I am doing so."

After further thought, he adds that discrimination is often thoughtless, that people only notice when they feel they are being discriminated against, and give no significance to the kinds of discrimination that have become habitual in their society.

Several of the participants in this study talked about their feelings of being discriminated against or experiencing racial prejudice. Kartik's account does not contradict their experience. It does, however, highlight the complexity of the relationships between what is taken for granted as *normal* and what is experienced as discriminatory. In global contexts of increasingly mixed populations, these concepts invite on-going exploration and evolving awareness.

### **Support - from the community and from school**

Kartik reports that he and his wife accept that they are the main source for teaching Shotto about his country of origin and culture. Gatherings with the Bangladeshi community people help to re-create some of the atmosphere of the country, but practices do not always align with his philosophy of child-rearing. “The children,” he says, “go to another room, closing the door and play computer games. We like to keep our child with us, play with him, and provide him with actual toys. So we have become choosy about mingling with community people, doing so mostly on national days and festivals.”

On the other hand, Kartik is very positive in his description of the way Shotto’s pre-school teachers support their son’s learning about his culture of origin. He reports that they always show interest when he or his wife share any information about Bangladesh and always welcome it when Shotto wears a lungi to class parties or his mother makes ethnic food.

Kartik is impressed that although they previously knew little about Bangladesh the teachers asked for a list of Bangla words to use with Shotto, learned them and used them. He comments on the sense of security it gave Shotto and his parents.

Kartik strongly emphasises the positive role the pre-school plays in teaching Shotto about his new culture. There, among other things, he learned to use a spoon and fork while eating, to put his gear in the right places, to use the word *please*, and to use toilet paper. He also learned to use and enjoy using Māori language. More important than any of the individual items, Kartik reflects, is the holistic way that the pre-school introduced Shotto to a cultural space that is not only Kiwi but also multicultural in its population of students and very accepting of Shotto’s own cultural identity. Kartik acknowledges that the teachers are actively developing Shotto’s sense of the cultural identity of Christchurch and his place in it. He adds that they are making him confident that he is a Kiwi child as well as still being Bangladeshi.

*Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand framework for early childhood education, states “Learner identity is enhanced when children’s home languages and cultures are valued in educational settings and when kaiako<sup>61</sup> are responsive to their cultural ways of knowing and being” (Ministry of Education, 2017, p.12). Kartik’s account affirms his satisfaction that the teachers in his son’s pre-school are actively trying to be responsive to Shotto’s own ways of knowing and being, are valuing his culture and language and so are dynamically supporting him in

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<sup>61</sup> teachers

developing his evolving identity not only as a learner but also as a person who was crossing cultures.

### **Teasing out key threads**

In working with Kartik's account, the key element that stands out for me is his willingness to be a learner. He does not expect to be able to simply transfer from one country to another: he knows he has to face change. As he reports his experiences and thoughts, it is evident that he sees change both as a need to adapt to new conditions and as an opportunity to interrogate old habitudes and social norms. He admits he has been challenged at times by difficulties that come with shifting countries, but he also affirms that he welcomes the opportunity to learn about and from his new context. And he determines to also support his son in developing a positive attitude to learning.

A major area of learning that Kartik identifies is that of sifting through his native cultural values and beliefs to find those that he and his wife should pass on to their son. Repeatedly he stresses he wants to ensure his son learns his language and history, the value of family, and develops respect in its widest sense, and that he wants to save his son from acquiring socially endorsed prejudices and superstitions. That he is still evolving his evaluation of his native cultural norms is evidenced in the way he reports the discussions he and his wife have had about Shotto's future marriage.

A complementary area is learning about New Zealand society and particularly about its bicultural foundations. It is clear from his reflections that Kartik sees himself as a participant in biculturalism, not a by-standing observer, and that he is actively encouraging his son to also participate. It is noteworthy that he seems to find an easy fusion between appreciating the multicultural nature of his community and committing to a bicultural national compact.

Kartik's appreciation of the value of collaboration with his son's pre-school is another important theme that emerges. He and his wife take time to engage with the teachers and participate in activities, they discuss language and learning, they reinforce what Shotto learns at school with practices at home. His reflections affirm the benefits Shotto gains from his pre-school and argue the importance of active communication between parents and teachers.

At the same time, it is clear that Kartik understands that he and his wife are ones who hold the responsibility for teaching their son Bangla language and culture. The school can support their teaching if parents give them the means to do so, but the only real resource is in the

home. Kartik indicates that it is in the home that his son will learn what he needs to know about his native culture and to speak his native language. School can support that learning by showing him that he – with all the cultural luggage that he brings – is welcomed in the class and has an important place within it.

## Chapter Eleven: Conclusion

The emphasis in the preceding six chapters has been on presenting the voices of the participants as authentically as I could through the development of dramatic monologues. Each monologue was followed by an exploration and discussion of the themes that emerged. However, in those chapters, although I have sometimes alluded to various theorisations, I was careful not to impose a theoretical interpretation on the opinions and understandings of the participants. In this chapter I stand back from the narratives a little and further consider what they provoke in considerations of racism, multiculturalism, the bicultural character of New Zealand and the ways schools and teachers can meet the needs to children of such parents. I am careful, however, to avoid imposing a theoretical construct onto the narratives too quickly. The narratives do provoke discussion of the ideas that I discussed in the Chapter One, Two and Four, I hope readers might engage in such explorations as I am in the process of doing myself. In the following section I record aspects of my own exploration of how the narratives align with, or may modify, existing theories. I am conscious that these explorations are in very initial stages. At this time I strongly desire to prioritise the narratives as personal accounts. I am mindful of Spivak's (2013) warning against bringing people from the margin into the centre for the purpose of taking control of their voices. Nevertheless I risk some discussion of the provocations that the narratives raise. I am aware I am walking a tightrope. In addition, I now look at the events of March 15<sup>th</sup> 2019 and the following days and consider what changes these events might make to dialogues could develop from what is said in the six narratives.

First, I pull together some of the threads of the last six chapters and briefly discuss similarities, differences and implications for the participants' children's education. Then I offer a brief account of the mosque shooting in Christchurch and the events that followed and reflected on how they may impact on our local understandings of the issues raised by the participants in this study. Then I return to four of the central challenges that have emerged from the narratives: the experience of racism, the nature of multiculturalism, the relationship between non-Pākehā immigrants and biculturalism, and the ways teachers and schools can collaborate with immigrant parents in achieving both family and curriculum goals.

### **Drawing out key themes from the case studies**

In this section, I look across the six narratives and highlight key threads. There are interesting reverberations of similarity and differences between them.

#### *Belonging..?*

One thread concerns how the participants see their residence in New Zealand. Baisakhi, Ashshin, Ashari and Poush have made a decision and taken steps to make this place their long term home, either through obtaining permanent residency or citizenship. Kartik has not been able to get residency yet, but hopes to be able to do so. Zuleikha emphasises that, while she has residency, her stay in New Zealand will be short term and that her family plans to seek better work in an Islamic country. Zuleikha and Poush see themselves as outsiders to the mainstream New Zealand community. Ashari and Ashshin strongly identify themselves as New Zealanders, although of different culture of origin, and see New Zealand as their chosen home. Baisakhi uses the term *pendulum* to reflect that while she is probably planning to stay New Zealand, she still swings between New Zealand and Tamil Nadu, India as her home. And Kartik wants to make New Zealand his home, but he is still seeking the means to do so. A teacher meeting these parents might not readily see these differences: length of stay and ownership of a passport are themselves not indicators of whether South Asians in Christchurch see themselves as migrants or immigrants and how they position themselves in relation to New Zealand. So this small collection of case studies indicates a wide variety of attitudes towards belongingness. This variety of attitudes is manifested in differences of participants' perceptions and attitudes towards aspects of their own culture and the culture of New Zealand and of what they want to pass on to their children.

The narratives indicate a range of elements from their home culture that participants want to retain and encourage their children to learn: language, customs, religion, values. What each particular participant wants to foster varies: for many it is language; for some it is aspects of their original national culture, but for others the religious culture is more important than their national culture.

#### *Language*

In terms of home language, Baisakhi, Ashshin, Poush and Kartik have been deliberately supporting their children to know their mother-language. They have utilised different strategies to retain the language and to learn its oral and written forms. Baisakhi's statements about how her home language is precious, Ashshin's community school involvement, and



Poush's continuous effort to avoid Banglish indicate the efforts they have taken to keep their native language alive. Kartik's account of how he researched ways of teaching Bangla to his son highlights how he as a parent considered it important to learn himself in order to take a big step in his child's life. Zuleikha, on the other hand, realised that she had lost the opportunity to promote the mother-language, Punjabi, as a result of choosing to promote the national language, Urdu. While she plans to teach Punjabi in future, she sees it more important to concentrate on English, which is the language of school, and Arabic, which is the language of religion. Ashari acknowledges the importance of her mother language and expresses her sadness that she did not try hard enough to retain it and that even oral language fluency is being lost through lack of practice. The variation in their expectations and practices that is noticeable in their discussion is significant in indicating the importance of discussion between home and school in this field so that teachers can be aware of the nature of parents' teaching at home and find ways to endorse it.

#### *Religion and culture*

Religion is a recurring theme in the participants' discussion. For Zuleikha and Ashari, religion is the centre of the cultural beliefs and values that they hold to and want to pass on to their children. Although they are from two different religions, there are many resemblances in their conviction that religion is more important than national identity and that it is religious knowledge and values that they most need to teach their children. Ashshin, on the other hand, is not teaching her daughter to be religious. She relates how modernisation and education have allowed her to shift from blind adherence to religion to be a logical thinker. Kartik and Poush explain they have faith in their religion, but that they do not practice regularly. Poush is trying to teach her son to practise religion in the way she practises it, but Kartik is focusing more on developing a sense of humanity in his child instead of teaching religious activities. Baisakhi's religious teaching is focused on carrying out religious activities correctly so that the children could understand the rules and the reasons behind them. Not only do the parents belong to four different religious categories, but each of them also has a very different way of practising and teaching religious values. The differences between these six narratives highlight the importance of not making assumptions about religious beliefs and attitudes.

#### *Retaining home customs*

Likewise, all six narratives highlight different ways of involving children in observing customs from the community of origin. Baisakhi, in her home, tries to celebrate every festival accurately and involve her children in it actively to teach them the procedure. For example,

she is teaching her daughter the traditional art of rangoli and henna that her native community custom requires for celebration. Ashshin, Kartik and Poush involve their children in celebrating their native customs with local people from the same national community; they seek to develop a strong sense of belonging to their cultural community. Their participation in various programmes with different forms of native art (for example, music, dance and poetry recitation) shows their resilient attachment to the community as well as to customs. Although Ashshin and Kartik do not only celebrate the festivals that come from their native community, Poush does restrict celebrations to Islamic ones in her home. Because she sees the Catholic religion as the central pillar of her identity, Ashari engages herself and her daughters more with the Christchurch community. She consciously avoids mass interaction with her native community people, explaining that the tensions that exist between her native ethnic communities, Tamil and Sinhala, guide her to make this decision. Zuleikha is carefully selective about engaging her family in any activity that she sees as non-Islamic. Although most of the participants, for example, Baisakhi, Ashari, Zuleikha, Poush, talk about the ways they encourage their children to enjoy the foods from their native culture, Ashshin and Kartik, on the other hand, explain that they bring a mix of native and western foods in their families' regular food consumption.

### *Values*

All of the parents talk about the importance of strong values: values coming from family or culture. They all indicate that they have observed some differences in their own values and in the values that they see as New Zealand values. They also explain the values they want to teach their children and why they want to teach them. The values include things like courtesy, respect to elders, man-woman relationships, and, in some cases, modest clothing. While some participants are determined to hold onto their received family values, others are looking for the values to come from the wider community. For instance, Ashari focuses more on Catholic values that she received from her religious instruction and from the wider Catholic community. Moreover, she selectively rejects many of the social values from her native country. All the participants, in fact, are selective about the native values that they wish to retain and transmit to their children. Some, including Kartik, are looking for cross-national commonalities in values. All the participants discuss how they have made major and minor changes in their appearances because of the weather and the social demands of Christchurch. Nevertheless, Baisakhi, Zuleikha, and Poush talk about the importance of not showing skin regardless of other changes in dress. And Baisakhi explains that while the wearing of *bindi*

may seem like a minor thing, not wearing it would represent a compromise in how she would like to present herself in adapting to the social life in Christchurch. The value of marriage comes out of the discussion with each participant. Participants' expectations for their children's marriage seems to grow out of their values: in particular, most participants express their hope that the children would choose a partner that will allow them to continue their culture in marriage.

Stuart and Ward (2009), Kwak and Berry (2001), DeSouza (2010), and Merail, (2015) variously reported South Asians' preferences for marriage with partners from a homogenous culture. The participants in this study indicate similar views. All of them signify that marriage is a vital aspect of their culture. Four participants firmly state that they want to have their children to marry someone with the same culture. While Baisakhi does not set a goal for her children to marry a person from the same culture, she does acknowledge that she will be deeply hurt if her children need to change their religion because of marriage. Kartik states that while he does not have any preference for his son's partner, he does expect it to be a girl and he mentions he would like to make a grand celebration of the wedding as is the custom in his native land. Zuleikha and Ashari acknowledge they are very strict with their religious preferences in terms of a future partner. Poush also prefers the same religion. Ashshin prefers to find a partner for her child who is from her native culture, but both Poush and Ashshin admit they may be disappointed since they are living abroad. These four participants have indicated that it is a real worry for them to think about the future families of their children.

Poush, as well as Ashari, explain that they have been discussing their marriage expectations with their children to avoid unexpected consequences. Several participants also explain that they have discussed the importance of restraint from intimate relationships with their children. Perhaps their expectations have been influenced by the gender of their children. Zuleikha, Ashari and Ashshin, who have daughters, mention that they are opposed to any physical intimacy before marriage. On the other hand, only Kartik, a father of a son, declares that he has no problem if his son is to have a live-in relationship without marriage. The varying views of these parents are significant for teachers and schools who are charged by the curriculum to provide health education, including education about sexuality. Health education is the sole part of the curriculum that specifically needs the board of trustees to consult with the school's community (Education Act 1989, s. 60B). The challenge for schools, as suggested by the narratives in this study, is to find means to hear the views of parents from

different cultures and to find ways of respecting the diversity of such views in their school plans.

#### *Rejection of some traditional native values*

Participants indicate that they do not want to keep all of the aspects of their native home culture. Each shows that there are some aspects of New Zealand culture that they have happily received and that they want to bypass some of their native traditions and attitudes. For example, many of them discuss how they have intentionally accepted the concept of gender equality from New Zealand culture. Others talk about their appreciation of New Zealand attitudes to an independent old age, of having the freedom to give their opinions, of less stressful ways of educating children, less social class discrimination, and celebration of new and varied festivals. Some of them, for example, Zuleikha and Ashari, also mention that here they can practice their own beliefs more freely since they have found the people in this society have a less obstructing attitude to other people's private lives.

#### **March 15<sup>th</sup> 2019**

During Jumma prayer on Friday March 15<sup>th</sup> 2019, a man entered the mosque in central Christchurch and shot at over a hundred people, drove on to another suburban mosque and shot more people. He was caught as he drove away from the second mosque and arrested. Over fifty people eventually died from the shooting, others were hospitalised, and many more were traumatised by the events. A state of emergency was declared; schools and public institutions were locked down until early evening in the city.

Almost immediately, people around New Zealand as well as in Christchurch reacted in shock and articulated solidarity and support of the Muslim community. Within a few hours the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, spoke out on television asserting that the attack on the victims was an attack on New Zealanders, repeatedly affirming "they are us" (Whyte, 2019). International media conveyed similar statements of solidarity (Ellis-Petersen et al., 2019; Regan & Sidhu, 2019). Over the next weeks, as those most immediately impacted mourned and supported survivors, communities around New Zealand, and abroad, held commemorative vigils, condemned all types of racism and expressed solidarity through donations of money, flowers, cards, wearing of head coverings and attendance at mosques. It

is noteworthy that in Christchurch Ngāi Tahu, holding mana whenua<sup>62</sup>, took leadership in public events as did other tribal leaders throughout New Zealand. Māori protocol shaped public events.

As a Muslim woman, I felt the immediate fear for myself and my family, the pain of loss of members of my close community, and I also felt warmed by the expressions of solidarity. Many of our known faces were missing, some were battling for their lives in intensive care of the local hospitals. Many of them recovered gradually with time, and some lost their mobility. However, the scars remained more deeply in their mind than the body. I also thought a lot about what racism means and how to explain what was happening to my six year old son. He knew the Al Noor mosque; he went there several times to pray and to attend communal programmes. He knew some of the victims closely, he saw one of his Mamu<sup>63</sup> laying in the bed of ICU, in life support. I and my husband decided to engage him with the support activities; he went to the communal gatherings, helped me preparing food and deliver it to the homes of the victims, went to the hospital to see the progress and spent time with the immediate families of the victims several times after the event. He also attended the memorial services and saw the floral tributes, toys, cards, candles murals, crafts and so many beautiful elements the citizen placed in different parts of the city honouring the victims. However, addressing all his *why?*s was difficult.

The way the Christchurch community reacted by standing beside the Muslim community affirming a harmony of humanity was truly remarkable, as were nationwide echoes of Jacinda Ardern's grieving but a declaratory statement that the attack "is *not* us". The event and the immediate nationwide popular reactions provoked debate in various national and international media discussions (for example, Ghumkhor, 2019; Dutta, 2019; Berentson, 2019; Locke, 2019; True, Chilmeran & Jhonston, 2019). And just a few weeks after March 15<sup>th</sup>, there was an incident that again shook the now nervous Muslim community: a man wearing a t-shirt with an image of Trump shouted obscenities outside the mosque accusing all Muslims of being terrorists ("Man wearing Trump t-shirt," 2019; "Christchurch shootings: Man in Trump," 2019). On the other hand, a number of community leaders from various

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<sup>62</sup> The Maori dictionary

(<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=mana+whenua>) defines *mana whenua* as "territorial rights, power from the land, authority over land or territory, jurisdiction over land or territory - power associated with possession and occupation of tribal land".

Mana whenua is a recognition of tribal authority in a location. Ngāi Tahu is the large tribal group who holds mana whenua over much of the South Island.

<sup>63</sup> Maternal uncle. My son calls the community members as uncle and auntie.

ethnicities spoke out about their experiences and observations of racism within New Zealand. A Māori leader, Tuari Potiki spoke about the history of racism in New Zealand. He shared his personal story about his stepson, which resonated with the way young Bhumi's experience was shared by her mother, Baisakhi:

He is now 30 years old, but when he was aged nine his mother found him in the bath trying to scrub the brown off because he didn't want to be called nigger at school anymore. Talk to our Pacific relations about their experiences. Talk to our students, Māori, Pacific, Asian, they will all give you recent examples and experiences of racism they have faced. Go anywhere around the country, any marae, any Māori community, Pacific community, Muslim community, any community will have their own experiences to share so yes – this is us. (Potiki, 2019)

As I acknowledged above, after the mosque attack, my first reaction, as a migrant student, was the fear about my cultural identity. When I came back to the university, my Asian colleagues shared the same response. Many stories came up: their bitter experiences that were hidden in their memory. And every experience has one connection: they have a different face, colour, and accent than the mainstream; their difference in culture was not welcomed. Arshi, one of my colleague, of Korean origin, shared that she has stopped driving for the last year, although she has a full driving license and a nice car. She is an early childhood teacher and has been living in Christchurch for the previous fourteen years, but reported that every day while driving she would hear swearing comments from Kiwi mainstream drivers on the road telling her to go back to home. She could not take the harassment anymore and stopped driving. I do not intend to share my experiences, but I can relate the stories I heard from my colleagues to Potiki's comment.

Racist reactions are present everywhere, although maybe the level of intolerance varies. There is no point to deny it, but it is crucial to find ways to deal with it and minimise it. As I have stated previously, in this research, it is not my goal to study racism as such. However, it came up in various discussions throughout the study. Perhaps it is unavoidable, and the event of March 15<sup>th</sup> makes it more urgent to acknowledge it while reporting immigrants' stories. It is an issue that teachers have been dealing with and will probably continue to deal in school, in various contexts. It is essential to know how the parents are preparing their children to deal with it, and how teachers should take steps if they face such a situation. Although it is possible that the parents in this study may now, after March 15<sup>th</sup>, express different thoughts

about what discrimination is and how to deal with it, the issues they raise in their narratives have not disappeared with the solidarity that has been expressed by New Zealand communities. Perhaps the solidarity and the acceptance of difference expressed at this time may endure and make experiences of being discriminated against rare. The way Zuleikha shows resilience in preparing her daughter to deal with bullying when she will start a hijab, may unfold differently in the future. Perhaps New Zealand is at a turning point. Time will tell.

### **Experiences of discrimination and complexities of racism**

Many of the parents, for instance, Baisakhi, Poush, Ashshin, and Ashari talk about racism and how they actively teach their children to deal with *discrimination* and *racism*. They have discussed their feelings of being *other*. This sense of being other is not unique for this research. Salpitikorala (2015) also explained about the sense of feeling *other-other* in her findings. One of the main themes in her findings was *acculturation to the mainstream* where she referred to mainstream New Zealand culture as the Pākehā culture. She found that the non-Māori ethnic minority participants experienced the acculturation process overwhelmingly with cultural shock and alienation due to the conflicting cultural values and the pressure by the dominant culture to assimilate into it.

The term *racism* does not come with a single definition and it is often used emotively and politically. It is variously theorised in the literature, but an important element is that of *power*. For example, Garner (2017) highlights that the concept of race is itself contested and notes that racism is a term used quite differently in different historical, political and social contexts. He argues that for the term to be useful it needs to encompass the following elements: “a historical power relationship in which, over time, groups are racialized..., a set of ideas (ideology) in which the human race is divisible into ‘races’... [and] forms of discrimination flowing from this (practices) ranging from denial of access to resources through to mass murder” (p.21).

Whether the discrimination and instances of abuse that participants have experienced comes from an *ideology* of race is disputable, as is perhaps the location of a *power* base. For example, is it race that provokes the critical and even pejorative comments that the participants report or is it perhaps an awkwardness with, even a fear of, difference? Is it perhaps fear of losing what has been accepted as *normal* in the face of people who have come

into the space who are different? To varying extents, the participants in this study report feeling they are the *other*, and that for some of them being positioned as the other makes difficulties for them in developing a belonging to the wider community in the place where they now live. That *otherness* has implications for how we might understand multiculturalism in New Zealand. It also has implications for education, both in schools and in wider society. Both these areas will be discussed later in this chapter. Before turning to multiculturalism, however, I want to problematise a little the way the issue of othering emerging from the narratives in this study.

Participants' expectations about marriage, and about abstinence from sex before marriage have implications for the friendships they are willing to encourage for their children and for their children's overall socialisation with children they meet at school and in the community. In particular, Ashshin, Zuleikha and Poush, who are expecting to have a homogenous religious marriage partner for their children, are overtly grooming their children to socialise with such people: they explicitly plan to encourage their children to get into a habit of mixing with the people, especially from the opposite sex, who are from a homogenous culture. With a migrant's lens, the parents' commitment to determining the future husband or wife for their children may simply indicate a conservative attitude towards native cultural practice. If the scenario were to change to the desire by a Pākehā parent to have a Pākehā son or daughter-in-law, could it be seen as racism? Are both racist attitudes, or neither? Alternatively, are both simply family preferences? What are the fine lines that define prejudice? At the least, these are discussions that seem very timely.

The question arises whether these formative expectations about socialisation and marriage may create difficulties for the children in making friends at school, and even in participating in school activities, such as marae visits and school performance. Are parents such as these in this study developing tight frameworks for children that may tie them to on-going dependency on their parents? And what kind of challenges are there for teachers in the potentially closed networks for relationships? Are the children's expectations similar to those of their parents? These case studies only reported parents' perspectives and their children's attitudes and behaviour were accessed only through their eyes. Perhaps what is important is not whether these particular children are truthfully maintaining what their parents are expecting from them or if they keeping their private lives hidden from their parents so as not to upset them, but rather that there is a possibility of difference. Teachers and schools need to navigate that possibility of difference and find ways of both respecting parents' values and



expectation and allowing scope for children to find their own way into adjusting to the complex cultural place they find themselves in.

### **Multiculturalisms**

Multiculturalism is one of the recurring themes in the narratives. Many of the parents state that they are the multicultural faces of this society, that migrants make the Christchurch society multicultural. In most of their discussions talk of multiculturalism is in terms of their native culture and the Kiwi culture. Several participants mention their interactions with the people from South Asian countries, Chinese, Irish, Korean, Malaysian, Nigerian people and from other cultures. However, none of them explore their relationship to a wide range of other cultures deeply. It is noteworthy that their interactions with people from other cultures have mostly been in English, which is the language of power. Some of them, for example, Ashshin and Zuleikha, tend to use some Hindi or Urdu words, but the medium of communication is English. In the various discussions, there is focus on the loss of native language and changes of accent in their native language (for example *Banglish*, different accents of Nepali, blurring of Sinhala and Punjabi) which reinforces an impression of their position at the periphery of culture compared to the dominant centre of English. It is, as noted in the literature review, a common feature of postcolonial literature in English. I mentioned earlier that these South Asian parents have their own postcolonial experiences from their native country. Although Nepal has never been directly colonised by the British power, as Crew (2018) reported, this country's history had been intensely "...entangled with the colonial histories and politics of South Asia" (p. 1).

Therefore, all of their viewpoints were possibly already shaped and reshaped by their native countries' post-colonial power struggles. These struggles have not only colonisation, but also complex experiences of repatriation and renationalisation. There have been political, economic identity shaping discourses that have shaped them. Some of their native communities became separated from the original country at the birth of the postcolonial era (Pakistan), some have faced civil wars (Sri Lanka, Nepal), a liberation movement (Bangladesh) and different levels of conflict between different ethnicities and with the neighbouring countries (India). It might be argued that these major challenges to cultural identity have encouraged development of a blinkered vision, rather like the eye blinkers worn by racehorses which narrow the sightlines of the horses to keep them unidirectional and

focused to the race ahead rather than on the crowd. Whether these forms of blinkered focus are useful or not is outside the scope of the current investigation. It might also be argued that to apply a theoretical filter to the participants' way of seeing things might prevent them from being heard in their own terms. As cited in Chapter Four, Spivak (2013) argues that the voices of the margin cannot be heard if they are transposed into the discourses of the centre. Nevertheless, the events of and following March 15<sup>th</sup> make neutrality an uncomfortable position. Therefore, some discussion of the concept of multiculturalism follows, together with discussion of how the participants' narratives align with various constructs. At the same time, it is important to allow readers to read the narratives as they stand, to hear the voices. In particular, it is important for schools and teachers to hear the direct voices so that they can plan productive engagement and collaboration.

I want to return to the discussion of participants' explanations of their identities that came at the start of this chapter. There is a significant range of differences in how the participants described their sense of identity within New Zealand. In Chapter Four, I cited Berry's (1997) four acculturation strategies. Ashari talks very strongly about wanting to be a part of the wider society and not to differentiate herself from it; it seems she has taken assimilation as her acculturation strategy. Apart from food and values, everything in her way of life, she states, is assimilated into the mainstream culture. She feels like an insider to the wider Christchurch community. However, she has maintained a distinct separation from the Sri Lankan community in Christchurch, and she is positioning herself as an outsider to them.

Ashshin, to some extent, integrates into the wider community, especially in terms of celebrating all festivals and dressing to match her surroundings. However, she also experiences some separation. For instance, she recounts her experience of being a tertiary student and feeling pushed to align herself with the other *brown faces*. Hence sometimes she is feeling like an insider and sometimes an outsider, and she is identifying herself as a third party, a *brown migrant*, in terms of the Māori-Pākehā relationship.

Kartik is positioning himself in the place of learning about his new context; he is keen to learn the indigenous language and history, and he is welcoming the new into his life. Integration is his acculturating strategy; he is moving into society while keeping his native language, music, food habits, festival and values alive in his child. He has been preparing himself to keep both sides of his identity active, and he is in the process of negotiating between them. Some others more firmly position themselves as other to the mainstream.

Baisakhi also intends to learn the indigenous culture, but she is not ready to emerge herself with what she calls the mainstream Kiwi culture. She shows solidarity with the minority ethnicities, especially with the indigenous Māori as being oppressed. While embracing her native identity, she has been trying to participate in the school actively, and in broader society, to contribute to her children's education. However, she regrets that she had to sacrifice the markings of her cultural identity to assimilate into society while being a student, a worker, a parent. She has repeatedly expressed separation, differences, power relations and the concept of *Us and Them*.

Poush, like Baisakhi, stays outside of the mainstream society that she defines as the Kiwi society. She is separating herself from every other culture other than her native one. She has learned some aspects of the indigenous culture when the initiative came from outside. Hence, in her story, separation seems to lead as her acculturation strategy.

Zuleikha has her own particular reasons for not involving herself in the culture of the host country and on not participating more with the culture of origin. It may seem like she is marginalising herself. However, she is not doing it because of being oppressed. It is her choice not to get involved. Moreover, by actively practising her religious culture, which is a part of her native culture as she defines it, she is also using a strategy of separation. Ward and Masgoret (2008) stated that most of the New Zealanders expect immigrants to integrate, and raised the questions of whether that was really happening in reality, and to what extent immigrants were finding this place welcoming to integrate. The narratives presented here indicate there is no homogenous answer to those questions. The narratives also suggest that while some aspects of the immigrants' sense of being other is the result of wider community reactions, some aspects are results of their own choice.

The theme of how the participants navigate their position between their native culture and the culture they have immigrated into can be considered in terms of the concepts of the *third space* (Bhabha, 1990; Greenwood, 2005, 2015, 2016). Greenwood (2015, p.55) described the *third space* as a site of "new developments that grow outside of existing norms". She suggested that it is a useful way of considering "something that grows out of existing but different spaces that somehow overlap and generate new possibilities. Such possibilities draw on their origins but do not replicate them or replace them". She argued that the "distinctive nature of the third space is that it is emergent, fluid and unscripted... It continuously needs to be discovered, negotiated, shaped". In this study I have suggested that the third space can be

seen in terms of the evolving cultural place of each immigrant parent. Each of the parents talks from a different position in this third space. Some of their narratives show that they are stepping into this space and wanting to contribute, participate and negotiate between the cultures. Some show that they are standing at the edge and looking at the third space from a slight distance. Perhaps some stories also position the parent as preferring to be entirely separate, uninterested in exploring the third space.

Baisakhi identifies the differences between both her native and New Zealand cultures and consciously positions herself and her family away from the *Kiwi culture*. She has identified many changes in her approach to deal with the challenges she has faced while confronting Kiwi culture and while experimentally stepping into the third space. Nevertheless, she continues to notice the relationship between race and power relationship, and she repeatedly says that she finds commonality with indigenous people in terms of their social values and in terms of being the oppressed group in society. By leaving behind most of the aspects of her Sri Lankan identity, Ashari has claimed her position inside the cultural place of Christchurch. She explains that most of what is commonly seen as Sri Lankan native culture is related to Buddhism, and she is using her immigration to avoid those aspects of culture. Again the minority-majority relationship becomes visible in this discussion: Ashari was in a minority as Catholic in her native country and is in a minority as a migrant in her host country. She says that she prefers her second identity, as it gave her more freedom of celebrating her religious identity. She relates that she has initially faced obstacles, but she has trained herself to learn and adapt, and now she is able to embrace the changes that are required by society. Ashshin and Kartik are trying to make a balance between both cultures, and so it might be argued they are stepping into an evolving third space. While Ashshin is actively building a close relationship with what she calls the brown migrants, she is not limiting herself only to them. In addition she is actively positioning herself to enable her child to learn some aspects of her native culture. Kartik reports how he is trying to figure out how to live between his native culture and what he has found in New Zealand: he maintains that both cultures are equally important, and it could be argued that he is actively exploring a third space. From their narratives, it appears that Poush and Zuleikha do not want to live in what could be seen as a third space. Poush acknowledges that she will have to live in the culture and practices she finds in New Zealand because it is inevitable. However, she deliberately articulates her commitment to holding Bangladeshi culture in a supreme position in her home and her intention to avoid the mainstream culture as much as she can. Zuleikha, on the other hand,

rejects most of the aspects of both cultures, except religion. She is consciously avoiding living in any space that would suggest a compromise with her religious values.

In the following section I will examine how the concept of biculturalism and the standing of Māori as indigenous people of New Zealand adds complexity to immigrants finding their way in the third space. First, I return to the complexity of the concept of multiculturalism.

*Multiculturalism* is not a unified concept; it is a word that has been loosely applied to a wide range of different ways of thinking. Just as society is fluid so the ideal constructs of multiculturalism are also fluid: they are based on people's experiences. Ang (1996) suggested that one can talk about a country like Australia being more multicultural than New Zealand because for a long time, Australia has had a more established multi-ethnic population. However, does the wide range of visible ethnic groups mean those groups have equal ways of representing their identity and of developing a sense of belonging? In other words, is multiculturalism the incidence of people of many ethnic origins living close to each other, perhaps without communicating with each other, or is it something else? It might be argued that multiculturalism is about *acceptance* of all cultures; but on what terms? Is it really likely to have a society where no culture holds more power than others, where there are no *norms* and no *others*? The idea smacks of utopianism. It also challenges the concept of biculturalism, which has become a tenet of New Zealand culture. No doubt the tide of history will shape the kinds of multiculturalism that will evolve. However, it is also important that people in New Zealand, Pākehā, Māori and new immigrants talk about what they want to evolve. Such conversations began after March 15<sup>th</sup>, although they were cautious and tended, on the whole, towards respectful politeness.

### **Biculturalism, the Treaty and mana whenua.**

I asked the participants what they understand about the Treaty and the place of Māori in New Zealand and how they are preparing their children to understand these matters. Their understandings and strategies for teaching their children differ considerably. What is apparent across their narratives, however, is that they have had little occasion to dialogue about these issues either with Māori or with the Pākehā. Some of them have met these issues in educational courses they have undertaken, like Ashari, Baisakhi and Ashshin, and so have had some opportunities to learn. Some who are deliberately wanting to learn, like Kartik, are actively seeking for sources to develop awareness from media, workforce environment and

other social platforms. Others hear about some of the issues while getting involved with their children's schools, but apparently not much. As an educator herself, Ashari talks about Māori underachievement in education; however, it seems she has limited recognition of the multigenerational impact of trauma from colonisation. Overall the narratives indicate a need for more opportunities to dialogue about these issues, even for those who have had some opportunities to learn.

Almost all of the parents in this research show concern about the future of the indigenous language. Most of them express a degree of eagerness for more opportunities to practise using Māori language; a few show hesitation in involving their children in such activities. Baisakhi prioritises the practice of the Tamil language at home, but she also emphasises the importance of valuing and teaching the Māori language in New Zealand's bicultural endeavour. Both Baisakhi and Ashari comment on lack of practice of the language inside the education environment and in the workforce. Ashari's questions present the problem as she, and seemingly several other participants, see it: "Did you hear about any national or mandatory exam that says you need to pass a Māori language test? Does any migrant need to learn anything about the language and culture before coming to the country?"

The government had set a target to build New Zealand as a bilingual country. Neilson (2018) and Lorean (2018) reported that a significant step, the Maihi Karauna strategy, has been taken by the government to revitalise Māori language: it has the goal to make a million Kiwi able to speak in basic Māori by 2040. The writers reported that the aim is achievable; however, there is still a lack of resources to make it possible. One of the goals of Maihi Karauna strategy is "85% of New Zealanders (or more) will value te reo Māori as a key part of national identity" (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2018). Since migrants are a significantly increasing portion of the population, the views of the parents in this research indicate some of the gaps that need to be addressed to make this goal successful.

A theme that emerges from the narratives is that the participants did not see a strong Māori presence in New Zealand's public life. Their perceptions may serve as a prompt to Pākehā New Zealanders to consider how formal statements of biculturalism are translated into life practice. Following the mosque shooting Māori leaders all over the country took a central role in providing community platforms to express grief and solidarity. The official national commemoration ceremonies were led by Māori and followed Māori protocol. Having watched all these ceremonies, would the participants in this study still say the same thing? Or

they would say something different about a Māori role? The days following March 15<sup>th</sup> showed Māori in the role as first people of the land and demonstrated some of what biculturalism in New Zealand means in terms of prioritising Māori culture. Māori claim *mana whenua*, the authority that comes from tribal relationship with the land. It can be argued that this is something immigrants usually have too little opportunity to see

Recognition of Māori as first people of the land has important implications for discussions of multiculturalism within New Zealand. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt to answer how recognition of indigenous rights, Treaty obligations and the rights of immigrants should fit together. Here it is simply important to note that concepts of multiculturalism where all cultures might be equally recognised and empowered have a number of potential clashes with New Zealand's commitment to being a bicultural country. It is equally noteworthy that the recognition of multiple cultures does not necessarily clash with a bicultural national identity. What is evident from this study is that immigrants need the opportunity to engage in more dialogues about these issues than are currently offered.

### **Relationships with schools**

An important theme in the narratives has been parents' expectations about what teachers and school should do. Their expectations differ. Baisakhi sees school as a collaborator: despite feeling disappointed with the first school, she acclaims the acceptance of the current school towards cultural diversity. She recounts that she and her child have faced racism, but have overcome the struggles. She argues that racism inside the school should not be regarded as the innocent behaviour of children and that there is a definite need for teachers to identify racist attitudes and deal with them. She actively participates in the school's multicultural activities to support her children in learning about their culture and the cultures of others. She voices her expectation that the school should do more about teaching cultural diversity in the classroom. She states that she is expecting a gradual improvement in the quality of such teaching. Zuleikha, on the other hand, expecting schools to confine themselves to academic activities only. She wants to do the teaching of culture separately on her own and does not want any interference in it. Ashshin and Kartik mainly share their preschool experiences. They are happy with the cultural activities the preschools are currently doing. Ashshin identifies that such activities have gradually reduced in primary school. She states that multicultural activities, inside and outside school, still tend to be related to entertainment. She

acknowledges that even entertainment activities are useful to help the wider community to understand the cultural diversity, and she says she is expecting that as a result of this entertainment, later on, people may become interested to understand diversity more deeply. Ashari also is happy with current practice. As an educator herself, she argues that it would be a chaotic situation if all the cultures were addressed inside the classroom. Poush discusses the many cultural activities her son's primary school have been undertaking and places importance on teachers' responsibility to teach cultural diversity.

Baisakhi and Poush report experiences of racism inside the school, but express different expectations of how teachers should respond. Both of their stories suggest that schools have the most important responsibility to teach the students about diversity. On the one hand, Poush was pleased with how the teachers reacted when Muntasir faced racist bullying. On the other hand, Baisakhi argues that some teachers, and the school system as a whole, have a significant lack of consequences for dealing with ethnic bullying. She stresses that not all teachers have a pro-parent approach to deal with cultural diversity inside the classroom. She adds that it is her own actions, as parent, which made her family receive acceptance and recognition by the school. Both parents' stories ask questions. In what ways do teachers need to take action against bullying amongst young children? From what age should it be noticed? Green (2019) reported that even three to five years old children could develop a bully attitude that needs to be dealt with by teachers or caregivers. She reported that it has frequently been found that young bullies often grow up with similar attitudes to the victims and carry out bullying all through their adolescence and later life. Flahive (2107) reported that New Zealand is struggling to deal with one of the highest rates of school bullying and of teen suicides in OECD<sup>64</sup> countries. Baisakhi focuses the issue by asking why immigrant children should suffer bullying in the first place, and why the school should then make them the material for teaching others. The grief that Baisakhi expresses highlights the need for prevention. Green (2019) stressed the need to keep the anti-bullying teaching practice in the teachers' daily micro-level interaction with pupils. She highlighted the need for prevention, intervention and monitoring in order for the schools to deal with bullying and suggested a whole school process<sup>65</sup> as a means to deal with the situation.

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<sup>64</sup> One of the "Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development" group countries.

<sup>65</sup> KiVa is an Anti-bullying programme for New Zealand schools, originated at Finland. It is a whole school strategy focused on prevention, intervention and monitoring.



The issues Baisakhi discusses are not new to teachers and schools. The government runs a website, and professional development is offered to help teachers develop strategies to deal with bullying. Pink Shirt Day<sup>66</sup> is one of a range of nationwide strategies to raise awareness of bullying. Many teachers actively acknowledge diversity and have developed effective strategies to deal with bullying on the basis of difference. Nevertheless, it is widely recognised as a complex problem. The narratives in this study offer a range of practical suggestions that could be the beginning of dialogues with parents about how it might be tackled. For instance, Baisakhi's making of videos and showing them to the class with explanations offers one practical strategy. Also important is her suggestion that schools should explore what cultural knowledge is interesting and appropriate to the particular age of students in a class.

Poush recommends that schools should deal with racism through "not punishment, but discussion". The cultural classes discussed by Poush could be a way to bring the family into the school. Students cannot know every culture of the world but they can gain some idea about the cultures alive in their class. Over the year, every classroom could perhaps plan weekly or fortnightly presentations prepared by the families of the children of that room. Then teachers and parents could discuss what is to be shared and how.

The parents in this study highlight that multicultural activities decrease when the child leaves the preschool, and reflect that schools tend to focus more on a yearly cultural week, largely with an emphasis on entertainment. Several parents argue that more strategies could be developed to spread activities that actively teach about cultures over the year, and that in preparing such activities, teachers and parents could share their different and shifting understandings. The most essential implication from these suggestions, I argue, is the need to open up more space for dialogue between teachers and parents.

Baisakhi reports how she developed a strategy of becoming more of an insider in the school so her complaints and perspectives could be heard by the school community and she was able to gain support. Although she talks about suffering, she also talks about learning, and she reflects that it was effective for her to reach out and become an active member of the school community. Her example offers a challenge to schools to find more ways of reaching out to help immigrants become key members of the school community.

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<sup>66</sup> Annually celebrated anti-bullying event. <https://www.pinkshirtday.org.nz/>

I have not reported intergenerational disagreements in this study as it has focused only on parents' perspectives and intentions. However, as I have noted in Chapter Four, other researchers (Stuart, Jose, Ward and Narayanan, 2010; Stuart, Jose, Ward, 2009) have found the presence of intergenerational conflicts in immigrant families. On the one hand, I am asserting there is a significant need for schools to take account of the parents' various views; on the other hand, I also acknowledge that the children's views may not always agree with the parents. Therefore the challenge for teachers is not just to respond to parents, but also to navigate some of the complexities that might arise when parents' and children's views differ. For instance, some children might want to do Kapa Haka, although the mother might not want them to. It would, therefore, be naïve to suggest that teachers should respond to all the expectations of parents. This too is an arena for more dialogue, and for more research.

### **Implications and further areas for my exploration**

March 15<sup>th</sup> created opportunities for dialogues in every community all over the country. How will such dialogues continue? Will the desire to generate understandings across cultures and religions develop and grow? Or will *things revert to normal* and will old attitudes be reconstructed? We do not know yet. However, the narratives reported in this study suggest that it is crucial for the country to engage in more cross-cultural dialogues. It is not just those in the mainstream who need to think more about the immigrants. The immigrants also have to think about who they are and who they want to be as well as about who other people in New Zealand are.

It might be argued that the mainstream of New Zealand, including government agencies, media, academia, and schools, has learned to talk about Māori issues, if not necessary satisfactorily at least in ways that make sense to them. However, there seems to be a lack of processes for communicating those ideas to people who are neither Māori nor Pākehā. The narratives in this study highlight a lack of opportunities for most of the participants to engage with Māori. There is a strong need to increase opportunities.

If the participating immigrant parents sometimes seem themselves biased, it is important to remember that being a first generation immigrant or a migrant is a place characterised by transition and that it is also often a place of struggle to make sense of differences. I recall my own arrival in New Zealand. On the first day in this country and also at my University, when I went to do the administration building to enrol, my ears were already nervous because of

the different accent to English and then I heard what I thought might be a greeting: *Kia ora*. I observed that the names of the buildings were in a different language. Inside the building where my office was, there were a variety of wood crafted murals hanging on the wall, which were quite different from any art forms that were familiar to me. It was my first encounter with the bicultural aspects of this country. I went back home, I read about the greeting and the art forms on the web, and repeatedly practised in front of the mirror to greet with *Kia ora* after listening to a recording on Google. When I started to come to my office regularly, I noticed that not all of the people were greeting in that way, and my mind started to filter people into two sections, those who greet and those who do not greet in that way. I started to be curious about the complexity. It is only a very small introduction to the struggles migrants face to comprehend the cultural context. Later in that month, I received an introduction to the concept of biculturalism. Even with all these support sources and opportunities provided by the university, as a newcomer international student from a non-English background, it took a long time to actually begin to understand biculturalism and the significance of the Treaty and I think I am still in this learning process. If such opportunities are not available to all the newcomers, how can migrating parents be expected to understand the culture of New Zealand?

As I have mentioned several times, the parents in this study are by no means homogenous. That is the most prominent theme. Each one is different. Perhaps, there are some common aspects, but each parent processes their experiences differently and has individual plans and expectations for teaching their children. So schools cannot expect South Asian parents to be the same. Not all parents would expect the school to support their language and culture, but some might want and need that support. So teachers need to sit with parents and talk about what they want and what the school can provide. From perceptions of the parents in this study, the multicultural activities that are offered to children at school depend so much on the teacher. So is development in this area a curriculum issue, or is it more about training our teachers to be more aware and equipping them with strategies for communicating with immigrant parents?

The narratives recorded in this study are potentially significant for the teacher educators, teachers, curriculum developers and education researchers, as they suggest that parents, schools, and the wider community need to be engaged in helping immigrant parents *teach culture* to their children.

One of the immediate outcomes I envisage from this study is that the narratives can be developed as a resource for teacher educators. It could become a book, as was suggested by one of the teacher educators in the audience at a conference where I presented one of the monologues dramatically. I have received an invitation to dramatise all the monologues and develop them into a solo performance by a theatre teacher at the conference who offered to direct me. Perhaps the monologues could become resource materials for the drama programmes in schools. They could be developed into an easily accessible graphic novel for students, parents and teachers. The character paintings can be the base to that further development. At the least, they are offered here in this thesis as a provocation for further discussion.

### **Recommendation for further research:**

This study was a case study. And therefore restrained within the boundaries of particular individuals in time and place, and generalisability is limited. The case study opens up question that would be useful for further research.

This thesis has not addressed the voices of the students who belongs to such a cultural place. Many of the aspirations of the parents may be different from those of their children. Students' voices could be explored in future studies to explore how they are reacting to the cultural teaching from their parents. Intergenerational conflict may or may not be found due to the difference in the children's experiences, motives and values. It would be useful to see what intergenerational complexities the schools are receiving and further studies could be done to address the strategies for the teachers.

Similarly it would be useful to investigate narratives of teachers who are dealing with culturally diverse children. The evolving cultural diversity of New Zealand needs expertise of the teachers. It would be powerful to hear the teachers' in-depth stories about how they are observing cultural diversity and engaging themselves with the activities that support all the parents and the students to understand diversity. It is also very important to explore the strategies that could allow the school system to be actively engaged with activities that help parents, teachers and the students to understand cultural diversity in the context of New Zealand.

As many of the participants in this study have noted, the nature of cultural activities in each classroom depends on the teachers. It is very timely to develop action research projects with

teachers and teacher educators that facilitate changes in understanding and practice of social justice.

The current study provokes further researchers to see the discourse of immigrants' education in an alternative way by observing difference as diversity. More exploration is needed to explore better ways to engage with parents, utilise their knowledge system as a resource. Most importantly this study highlights that it is necessary to create more opportunities for parents to engage with various levels of dialogue to understand the concepts biculturalism within a New Zealand context. Future studies can be done to investigate strategies to create such opportunities.

In this study I have tried to utilise a creative approach in representing qualitative data. This methodology could be adopted and adapted in further studies to explore ways of representation which are different from the conventional patterns of representing stories in academia.

### **And finally**

This research was carried out in a context before the mosque shooting. Other research may be needed to explore the post-shooting perceptions and experiences of immigrant parents and even how the perceptions and intentions of this group may have shifted. It would also be interesting to explore how the second generation immigrant parents in Christchurch position themselves in terms of *teaching culture* to record shifts in ideas in understandings and in attitudes.

In my introduction, I have addressed the shooting event as neutrally as I could. I have to acknowledge that I was deeply emotionally involved. Many questions arose that need further exploration. How do students in pre-school, primary school and secondary school different levels of education process the event and how does it impact on them? What strategies could be developed to prevent such a situation for the future? It might be asked: if that shooter had been educated in a school and a community that values diversity, would he still hold the gun?

In the midst of its horrible consequences, the event taught one promising lesson: that an act of hate may trigger the development of love. Although a terrible thing occurred within the community, it did not stay divided. On that time it was not an issue for only the Muslim community; teachers, students, parents, workers of every ethnicity, different kinds of identity, the whole of the Christchurch community came together to share the grief. So if the whole

community cares when the things go wrong, then why not before? As I have mentioned before, public reactions to the event have started to break down distances, and dialogues have started. Our communities and individuals can make use of this germination and offer an environment for the seed to grow and bloom. It will be interesting to see how it makes an effect on the future of education in New Zealand.

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## **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1 Information sheet for participants .....	296
Appendix 2 Consent form for participants.....	297
Appendix 3 topics likely to be discussed in the interviews .....	298
Appendix 4 Consent letter from the artist.....	299



## Appendix 1 Information sheet for participants

Telephone: 039264950

Cell phone: 0210243547

Email: sharnali.tisi@pg.canterbury.ac.nz

August 2015



### Case studies of South Asian parents in Christchurch about their way of teaching culture.

#### Information sheet for participants

I am Sharnali Atashi Tisi, a PhD candidate in College of Education, Health & Human Development at the University of Canterbury. My research explores how new migrant parents in Christchurch aim to culture to their children, and what they do. I am interested to know how parents seek to pass on the culture of their Native country and how they help their children understand and fit into the culture of New Zealand Society.

This letter is a formal follow-up to the verbal discussion we have already had about my project, and so if a formal invitation to take part in this study. If you agree to participate, I would like to meet with on a regular basis for the next two and a half years. We can negotiate how often and how we meet together. As a rough however, I am suggesting we meet for about two hours, every two months. In those meetings we will talk about how you want to help your child learn about culture (your native culture and the culture of New Zealand) and what supports your goals and what makes them difficult. I will take notes during these meeting and also record parts of them.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and if you do participate, you will have the right to withdraw at any stage. If you withdraw, I will remove any information relating to you, provided this is practically achievable.

Data will be securely stored in password protected digital storage. It will be destroyed after ten years. Only my doctoral supervisors and I will have access to the raw data, those I will use in my thesis and in any publications or presentations from this research. You will be given a pseudonym and so you as a person will be anonymous. You will receive the transcript of the interviews. My e-mail address is at the top of this page. You may contact me if you have any questions about the study at any stage.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee; Complaints may be addressed to The Chair, Educational Research Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch, Email: human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz. Please complete the consent form if you understand and agree to take part in the study and send it to me at the postal address given below in the next seven days.

Thank you for reading this.

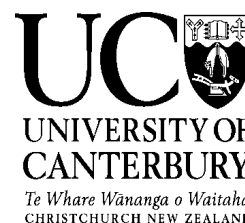
Sharnali Atashi Tisi

5/32 Hanrahan Street,

Upper Riccarton,

Christchurch 8041.

## Appendix 2 Consent form for participants



Postal Address: 5/32 Hanrahan Street,  
Upper Riccarton,  
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Cell phone: 02102435347

Telephone: 039264950

August 2015

### Case studies of South Asian parents in Christchurch about their way of teaching culture.

#### Consent form for participants

I have been given a full explanation of this project and have been given an opportunity to ask questions.

I understand what will be required of me if I agree to take part in this project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any stage without penalty.

I understand that my own name will not be used to identify any information or opinions I provide and that I will be given a pseudonym in that any published or presentations as well as in the thesis.

I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept digitally in secure facilities at the University of Canterbury and will be destroyed after ten years.

I understand that I will get the transcripts of the interviews from Sharnali Atashi Tisi.

I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Sharnali Atashi Tisi. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Educational Research Human Ethics Committee.

By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\* Please return the consent form after signing at the postal address given on the top of this page.

*Best Regards*  
*Sharnali Atashi Tisi*

### **Appendix 3 topics likely to be discussed in the interviews**

#### **Range of topics likely to be discussed in the interviews**

**Please note that is not a schedule of questions. These are the broad topic I hope to cover in discussions over time.**

#### **In terms of parents' native context-**

1. What aspects of their native culture do parents want to transmit to their children, and to sustain? Why?
2. What aspects of their native culture do they want to let go off and help their children to bypass? Why?
3. How do they carry out this teaching? In terms of language, religion, values, art, festivals, food, other culture etc.? Why?
4. What problems arrive in terms of maintaining language, religion, values, art, festivals, food, other culture etc.? Why?
5. What successes occur in terms of maintaining language, religion, values, art, festivals, food, other culture etc.? Why?

#### **In terms of the Christchurch context-**

6. How do Participants see the multiculturalism and Treaty relationship in Christchurch and wider NZ settings?
7. How do they want their children to fit into that Treaty relationship? Why?
8. What do the parents understand about the Treaty of Waitangi and how do they prepare their children to understand the Treaty? Why and how?

#### **In terms of the support sources**

9. What structures and resources support the parents in terms of maintaining their native language, religion, values, art, festivals, food, other aspects of culture etc.? Why?
10. What support structures and resources do they have to help to learn about the Treaty and NZ cultural relationships?
11. How do they perceive the impact of schooling on helping their children to:
  - a. Retain their culture of origin?
  - b. Fit into the new society?
12. Do they perceive the support from school is enough? If not, what are the suggestions?
13. What support sources would they like to have to understand multicultural / bicultural relationship in New Zealand?

#### **Appendix 4 Consent letter from the artist.**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I hereby want to declare that all the characters those I have drawn are done based on the suggestions from the model photographs of Sharnali Atashi. I have not seen the real-life characters and drawn them from my imaginations maintaining their contextual attires and corresponding postures.

Regards,



Dhiman Sarkar,

Artist

Dhaka

Bangladesh.